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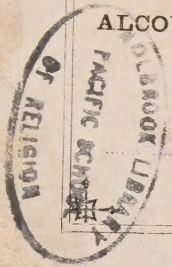

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JAMES BEATTIE, LL.D.

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THE WORKS

OF

JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D.

VOLUME IV.

ESSAYS

On the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism.
On Poetry and Musick, as they affect the Mind.
On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition.
On the Utility of Classical Learning.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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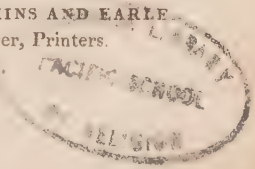

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AN ESSAY

ON THE

NATURE AND IMMUTABILITY

OF

TRUTH,

IN OPPOSITION TO

SOPHISTRY AND SCEPTICISM.

Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapientia dicit.

JUVENAL.

PREFACE.

THIS edition will, it is hoped, be found less faulty than any of the former. Several inaccuracies are now removed, unnecessary words and sentences expunged, a few erroneous passages either cancelled or rectified, and some new modelled in the style, which before seemed too harshly or too strongly expressed.

In regard to the reasonings and general principles of this essay, I have not as yet seen cause to alter my opinion; though I have carefully attended to what has been urged against them by several ingenious authors. Some objections will perhaps be found obviated by occasional remarks and amendments interspersed in this edition. I once intended to have offered a more complete vindication, and had actually prepared materials for it: but, finding them swell to a considerable bulk, and recollecting, that disputes of this nature, when once begun, are not soon terminated, and are apt to become less useful as they grow more voluminous, I was easily prevailed with to

lay aside that design, at least till providence should be pleased to grant me better health. Even then, the prosecution of this controversy may not perhaps be thought requisite. To the wise a word is said to be enough. If the principles of this book be good, they need no further support; if erroneous or bad, they deserve none. All I shall add at present on this head, is, that after a long examination of these matters, it appears, not to me only, but to many other persons of far superiour understanding, that my principles are founded on right reason, and on that way of thinking and judging, which has in every age been most familiar to the human mind. To advance paradoxes, or to be an innovator in philosophy, was never my design. I hate paradoxes; I am no friend to innovation. If I cannot reconcile myself to some modern theories of the understanding, it is for this reason, among others, because I look upon them as paradoxical, and inconsistent with those dictates of rationality, which seem to me to be as old and as extensive as human nature. It is possible I may have thrown a little light on some points relating to moral science; but to discover in the human mind any thing which was never discovered before, would require a degree of sagacity which I am certain I do not possess.

A complete theory of evidence is not to be ex-

pected in this book. The attentive reader will see I never intended one. That is a very copious and difficult subject; and I have not prosecuted it further than my argument seemed to require. It is with great pleasure I take this opportunity to declare, that the best theory of evidence I have ever seen, is delivered by my excellent friend Dr. Campbell, in that most ingenious and learned performance, *The Philosophy of Rhetorick*. His principles and mine, though they differ somewhat in the arrangement, (in which I am inclined to think that his have the advantage) will not be found to differ in any thing material.

I have been blamed for borrowing some hints without acknowledgment, from Dr. Price, Dr. Oswald, and Buffier. I beg leave to say, that I am to this hour totally unacquainted with that work of Dr. Price which is alluded to; and that, when I published the first edition of the essay on truth, I was totally unacquainted with the writings of Buffier and Dr. Oswald. I had heard indeed, that the French philosopher used the term *common sense* in a way similar to that in which I use it; but this was only hearsay; and I have since found, that though between his fundamental opinions and mine there is a striking resemblance, his application of that term is not entirely the same. I should not have mentioned this,

if I did not think, that it supplies an argument in favour of our common principles.

I had finished all these papers for the press, when a friend at London sent me an *advertisement*, which had just then appeared prefixed to a new edition of Mr. Hume's essays; and which, in justice to that author, I shall here insert, subjoining a few remarks in justice to myself.

" Most of the principles and reasonings con-
" tained in this volume were published in a work
" in three volumes, entitled, *A Treatise of Human*
" *Nature:* a work, which the author had projec-
" ted before he left the college, and which he
" wrote and published not long after. But not
" finding it successful, he was sensible of his er-
" rour in going to the press too early, and he cast
" the whole anew in the following pieces; where
" some negligences in his former reasoning, and
" more in the expression, are, he hopes, correct-
" ed. Yet several writers, who have honoured the
" author's philosophy with answers, have taken
" care to direct all their batteries against that
" juvenile work, which the author never acknow-
" ledged, and have affected to triumph in any ad-
" vantages which, they imagined, they had ob-
" tained over it: a practice very contrary to all
" rules of candour and fair dealing, and a strong
" instance of those polemical artifices, which a

" bigoted zeal thinks itself authorized to em-
" ploy. Henceforth the author desires, that the
" following pieces may alone be regarded as con-
" taining his philosophical sentiments and prin-
" ciples." Thus far Mr. Hume.

I do not think it was with an evil purpose, that any of those who attacked this author's philosophy directed their batteries against the *treatise of human nature*. In regard to myself, the case was briefly this.

Ever since I began to attend to matters of this kind, I had heard Mr. Hume's philosophy mentioned as a system very unfriendly to religion both revealed and natural, as well as to science; and its author spoken of as a teacher of sceptical and atheistical doctrines, and withal as a most acute and ingenious writer. I had reason to believe, that his arguments, and his influence as a great literary character, had done harm, by subverting or weakening the good principles of some, and countenancing the licentious opinions, of others. Being honoured with the care of a part of the British youth; and considering it as my indispensable duty (from which I trust I shall never deviate) to guard their minds against impiety and errour, I endeavoured, among other studies that belonged to my office, to form a right estimate of Mr. Hume's philosophy, so as not only to under-

stand his peculiar tenets, but also to perceive their *connection* and *consequences*.

In forming this estimate, I thought it at once the surest and the fairest method to begin with the *treatise of human nature*, which was allowed, and is well known to be, the groundwork of the whole; and in which some of the principles and reasonings are more fully prosecuted, and their connection and consequences more clearly seen by an attentive reader, (notwithstanding some inferiority in point of style,) than in those more elegant republications of the system, that have appeared in the form of *essays*. Every sound argument that may have been urged against the paradoxes of the *treatise*, particularly against its first principles, does, in my opinion, tend to discredit the system; as every successful attempt to weaken the foundation of a building does in effect promote the downfal of the superstructure. Paradoxes there are in the *treatise*, which are not in the *essays;* and, in like manner, there are licentious doctrines in these, which are not in the other: and therefore I have not directed *all* my batteries against the first. And if the plan I had in view when I published this book, had been completed, the reader would have seen, that, though I began with the *treatise of human nature*, it was never my intention to end with it. In

fact, the essay on truth is only one part of what I had projected. Another part was then in so great forwardness, that I thought its publication not very remote, and had even made proposals to a bookseller concerning it; though afterwards, on enlarging the plan, I found I had not taken so wide a view of the subject as would be necessary. In that part my meaning was, to have applied the principles of this book to the illustration of certain truths of morality and religion, to which the reasonings of Helvetius, of Mr. Hume in his *essays*, and of some other modern philosophers, seemed unfavourable. That work, however, I have been obliged, on account of my health, to lay aside; and whether I shall ever be in a condition to resume it, is at present very uncertain.

For these eighteen years past, (and before that period I knew nothing of this author's writings) I have always heard the *treatise of human nature* spoken of as the work of Mr. Hume. Till after publishing the essay on truth, I knew not that it had ever been said, or insinuated, or even suspected, that he either did not acknowledge that treatise, or wished it to be considered as a work which he did not acknowledge. On the contrary, from his reprinting, so often, in *essays* that bore his name, most of the principles and reasonings contained in it; and never, so far as I had heard, disa-

vowing any part of it; I could not but think, that he set a very high value upon it. By the literary people with whom I was then acquainted it had been much read; and by many people it was much admired. And, in general, it was considered as the author's chief work in philosophy, and as one of the most curious systems of human nature that had ever appeared. Those who favoured his principles spoke of it as an unanswerable performance. And whatever its success might have been as an article of sale, (a circumstance which I did not think it material to inquire into) I had reason to believe, that as a system of licentious doctrine it had been but *too successful;* and that to the author's reputation as a philosopher, and to his influence as a promoter of infidelity, it had contributed not a little.

Our author certainly merits praise, for thus publicly disowning, though late, his *treatise of human nature;* though I am sorry to observe, from the tenour of his declaration, that he still seems inclined to adhere to "most of the reasonings and principles contained in that treatise." But if he has now at last renounced any one of his errours, I congratulate him upon it with all my heart. He has many good as well as great qualities; and I rejoice in the hope, that he may yet be prevailed on to relinquish totally a system,

which I should think would be as uncomfortable to him, as it is unsatisfactory to others. In consequence of his advertisement, I thought it right to mitigate in this edition some of the censures that more especially refer to the *treatise of human nature:* but as that treatise is still extant, and will probably be read as long at least as any thing I write, I did not think it expedient to make any material change in the reasoning or in the plan of this performance.

April 30, 1776.

INTRODUCTION.

TO those who love learning and mankind, and who are more ambitious to distinguish themselves as men, than as disputants, it is matter of humiliation and regret, that names and things have so oft been mistaken for each other; that so much of the philosopher's time must be employed in ascertaining the signification of words; and that so many doctrines, of high renown, and of ancient date when traced to their first principles, have been found to arise from verbal ambiguity. If I have any knowledge of my own heart, or of the subject I intend to examine, I may venture to assure the reader, that it is no part of the design of this book, to encourage verbal disputation. On the contrary, it is my sincere purpose to avoid, and to do every thing in my power to check it; convinced as I am, that it never can do any good, and that it has been the cause of much evil, both in philosophy and in common life. And I hope I have a fairer chance to escape it, than some who have gone before me in this part

of science. I aim at no paradoxes; my prejudices (if certain instinctive suggestions of the understanding may be so called) are in favour of truth, virtue and christianity; and I have no principles to support, but such as seem to me to have influenced the judgment of the rational part of mankind in all ages of the world.

Some readers may think, that there is but little merit in this declaration; it being as much for my own credit, as for the interest of mankind, that I guard against a practice, which is acknowledged to be always unprofitable, and generally pernicious. A verbal disputant! what claim can he have to the title of philosopher? What has he to do with the laws of nature, with the observation of facts, with life and manners? Let him not intrude upon the company of men of science; but repose, with his brethren Aquinas and Suarez, in the corner of some Gothic cloister, dark as his understanding, and cold as his heart. Men are become too wise to be amused with words, and too *firmminded* to be confuted with quibbles. Many of my contemporaries would join in this apostrophe, who yet are themselves the dupes of the most egregious dealers in logomachy that ever perverted the faculty of speech. In fact, from some instances that have occurred to my own observation, I have reason to believe, that

verbal controversy has not always, even in this age been accounted a contemptible thing: and the reader, when he comes to be better acquainted with my sentiments, will perhaps think the foregoing declaration more disinterested than at first sight it may appear.

They who form opinions concerning the manners and principles of the times, may be divided into three classes. Some will tell us that the present age transcends all that have gone before it, in politeness, learning, and good sense; will thank providence (or their stars) that their lot of life has been cast in so glorious a period; and wonder how men could support existence amidst the ignorance and barbarism of former days. By others we are accounted a generation of triflers and profligates; sciolists in learning, hypocrites in virtue, and formalists in good breeding; wise only when we follow the ancients, and foolish whenever we deviate from them. Sentiments so violent are generally wrong: and therefore I am disposed to adopt the notions of those who may be considered as forming an intermediate class; who, though not blind to the follies, are yet willing to acknowledge the virtues, both of past ages, and of the present. And surely, in every age, and in every man, there is something to praise, as well as something to blame.

When I survey the philosophy of the present age, I find much matter of applause and admiration. Mathematicks, natural philosophy, and natural history, in all their branches, have risen to a pitch of perfection, that does signal honour to human capacity, and far surpasses what the most sanguine projectors of former times had any reason to look for: and the paths to further improvement in those sciences are so clearly marked out, that nothing but honesty and attention seems requisite to ensure the success of future adventurers. Moral philosophy and logick have not been so fortunate. Yet, even here, we have happily got rid of much pedantry and jargon; our systems have more the appearance of liberal sentiments, good taste, and correct composition, than those of the schoolmen; we disclaim (at least in words) all attachment to hypothesis and party; profess to study men and things, as well as books and words; and assert, with the utmost vehemence of protestation, our love of truth, of candour, and of sound philosophy. But let us not be deceived by appearances. Neither moral philosophy, nor the kindred sciences of logick and criticism, are at present upon the most desirable footing. The rage of paradox and system has transformed these, which of all sciences ought to be the simplest and the clearest, into a mass of

confusion, darkness, and absurdity. One kind of jargon is laid aside; but another has been adopted, more fashionable indeed, but not less frivolous. Hypothesis, though verbally disclaimed, is really adhered to with as much obstinacy as ever. Words have been defined; but their meaning still remains indefinite. Appeals have been made to experience; but with such misrepresentation of fact, and in such equivocal language, as plainly show the authors to have been more concerned for their theory, than for the truth. All sciences, and especially moral philosophy, ought to regulate human practice: practice is regulated by principles, and all principles suppose conviction: yet the aim of some of our celebrated moral systems is, to divest the mind of every principle, and of all conviction; and, consequently, to disqualify man for action, and to render him useless, and wretched. In a word, SCEPTICISM is now the profession of our fashionable inquirers into human nature; a scepticism that is not confined to points of mere speculation, but has been extended to practical truths of the highest importance, even to those of morality and religion.

I said that my prejudices are all in favour of truth and virtue. To avow any sort of prejudice, may perhaps startle some readers If it should, I must here entreat all such to pause a moment,

and ask of their own hearts these simple questions: Are virtue and truth useful to mankind? Are they matters of indifference? Or are they pernicious? If any one finds himself disposed to think them pernicious, or matters of indifference, I would advise him to lay my book aside; for it does not contain one sentiment in which he can be interested; nor one expression with which he can be pleased. But he who believes that virtue and truth are of the highest importance, that in them is laid the foundation of human happiness, and that on them depends the very existence of human society, and of human creatures; that person and I are of the same mind; I have no prejudices that he would wish me not to have: he may proceed: and I hope he will proceed with pleasure, and encourage, by his approbation, this honest attempt to vindicate truth and virtue; and to overturn that pretended philosophy, which supposes, or which may lead us to suppose, every dictate of conscience, every impulse of understanding, and every information of sense, questionable and doubtful.

This sceptical philosophy (as it is called) seems to me to be dangerous, not because it is ingenious, but because it is subtle and obscure. Were it rightly understood, no confutation would be necessary; for it does, in fact, confute itself, as I

hope to demonstrate. But many, to my certain knowledge, have read it, and admitted its tenets, who do not understand the grounds of them; and many more, swayed by the fashion of the times, have greedily adopted its conclusions, without any knowledge of the premises, or any concern about them. An attempt therefore to expose this pretended philosophy to publick view, in its proper colours, will not, I hope be censured as impertinent by any whose opinion I value: if it should, I shall be satisfied with the approbation of my own conscience, which will never reproach me for intending to do good.

I am sorry, that in the course of this inquiry, it will not always be in my power to speak of some celebrated names with that deference, to which superiour talents and superiour virtue are always entitled. Every friend to civil and religious liberty, every lover of mankind, every admirer of sincerity and simple manners, every heart that warms at the recollection of distinguished virtue, must consider Locke as one of the most amiable, and most illustrious men, that ever our nation produced. Such he is, such he will ever be, in my estimation. The parts of his philosophy to which truth obliges me to object, are but few, and, compared with the extent and importance of his other writings, extremely inconsiderable. I object to

them, because I think them erroneous and dangerous; and I am convinced, that their author, if he had lived to see the inferences that have been drawn from them, would have been the first to declare them absurd, and would have expunged them from his works with indignation. Berkeley was equally amiable in his life, and equally a friend to truth and virtue. In elegance of composition he was perhaps superiour. I admire his virtues: I can never sufficiently applaud his zeal in the cause of religion: but some of his reasonings on the subject of human nature I cannot admit, without renouncing my claim to rationality. There is a writer now alive, of whose philosophy I have much to say. By his philosophy, I mean the sentiments he has published in a book called, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in three volumes, printed in the year 1739; the principal doctrines of which he has since republished again and again, under the title of, *Essays Moral and Political*, &c. Of his other works I say nothing; nor have I at present any concern with them. Virgil is said to have been a bad prose writer; Cicero was certainly a bad poet: and this author, though his philosophy of human nature be in many things exceedingly reprehensible, may yet be a profound politician, and a learned, elegant, and accurate historian. His high merit in these

characters is indeed generally allowed: and if my suffrage could add any thing to the lustre of his reputation, I should here, with great sincerity and pleasure, join my voice to that of the publick, and make such an encomium on the author of *The History of England* as would not offend any of his rational admirers. But why is this author's character so replete with inconsistency? Why should his principles and his talents extort at once our esteem and detestation, our applause and contempt? That he, whose manners in private life are said to be so agreeable, should yet, in the publick capacity of an author, have given so much cause of just offence to all the friends of virtue and mankind, is to me matter of astonishment and sorrow, as well as of indignation. That he, who succeeds so well in describing the fates of nations, should yet have failed so egregiously in explaining the operations of the mind, is one of those incongruities in human genius, for which perhaps philosophy will never be able fully to account. That he, who has so impartially stated the opposite pleas and principles of our political factions, should yet have adopted the most illiberal prejudices against natural and revealed religion: that he, who on many occasions has displayed a profound erudition, should sometimes, when intoxicated with a favourite theory, have

suffered affirmations to escape him, which men of no great learning might perceive to be ill founded: and, finally, that a moral philosopher, who seems to have exerted his utmost ingenuity in searching after paradoxes, should yet happen to light on none but such as are on the side of licentiousness and scepticism: these are inconsistencies equally inexplicable. And yet, that this author is chargeable with all these inconsistencies, will not, I think, be denied by any person of sense and candour, who has read his writings with attention. His philosophy has done great harm. Its admirers, I know, are numerous; but I have not as yet met with one person, who both admired and understood it. We are prone to believe what we wish to be true: and most of this author's philosophical tenets are so well adapted to what I fear I may call the fashionable notions of the times, that those who are ambitious to conform to the latter, will hardly be disposed to examine scrupulously the evidence of the former. Having made this declaration, which I do in the spirit of an honest man, I must take the liberty to treat this author with that plainness, which the cause of truth, and the interests of society, seem to me to require. The same candour that prompts me to praise, will also oblige me to blame. The inconsistency is not in me, but in

him. Had I done but half as much as he, in labouring to subvert principles which ought ever to be had sacred, I know not whether the friends of truth would have granted me any indulgence; I am sure they ought not.

If it shall be acknowledged by the candid and intelligent reader, that I have in this book contributed something to the establishment of old truths, I shall not be much offended, though others should pretend to discover, that I have advanced nothing new. Indeed I would not wish to say any thing on these subjects, that has not often occurred to the rational part of mankind. In logick and ethicks, we may have new treatises, and new theories; but we are not now to expect new discoveries. The principles of moral duty have long been understood in these enlightened parts of the world; and mankind, in the time that is past, have had more truth under their consideration, than they will probably have in the time to come. Yet he, who makes these sciences the study of his life, may perhaps collect particulars concerning their evidence, which, though known to a few, are unknown to many; may set some principles in a more striking light than that in which they have been formerly viewed; may devise methods of confuting new errours, and exposing new paradoxes; and may hit upon a more

popular way of displaying what has hitherto been exhibited in too dark and mysterious a form.

It is commonly allowed, that the science of human nature is of all human sciences the most curious and important. To know ourselves is a precept which the wise in all ages have recommended, and which is enjoined by the authority of revelation itself. Can any thing be of more consequence to man, than to know what is his duty, and how he may arrive at happiness? It is from the examination of his own heart, that he receives the first intimations of the one, and the only sure criterion of the other. What can be more useful, more delightful, and more sublime, than to contemplate the Deity? It is in the works of nature, particularly in the constitution of the human soul, that we discern the first and most conspicuous traces of the Almighty; for without some previous acquaintance with our own moral nature, we could not have any certain knowledge of his. Destitute of the hope of immortality, and a future retribution, how contemptible, how miserable is man! And yet, did not our moral feelings, in concert with what reason discovers of the Deity, evidence the probability of a future state, and that it is necessary to the full vindication of the divine government, we should be much less qualified, than we now are, to judge

rationally of that revelation, by which life and immortality have been brought to light.

How then is this science to be learned? In what manner are we to study human nature? Doubtless by examining our own hearts and feelings, and by attending to the conduct of other men. But are not the writings of philosophers useful towards the attainment of this science? Most certainly they are: for whatever improves the sagacity of judgment, the sensibility of moral perception, or the delicacy of taste; whatever renders our knowledge of moral and intellectual facts more extensive; whatever impresses our minds with more enlarged and more powerful sentiments of duty, with more affecting views of God and providence, and with greater energy of belief in the doctrines of natural religion; every thing of this sort either makes us more thoroughly acquainted, or prepares us for becoming more thoroughly acquainted with our own nature, and with that of other beings, and with the relations they and we bear to one another. But I fear we shall not be able to improve ourselves in any one of these respects, by reading the modern systems of scepticism. What account then are we to make of those systems and their authors? The following essay is partly designed as an answer to this question. But it has a further view: which is, to

examine the foundations of this scepticism, and see whether these be consistent with what all mankind acknowledge to be the foundations of truth; to inquire, whether the cultivation of scepticism be salutary or pernicious to science and mankind; and whether it may not be possible to devise certain *criteria*, by which the absurdity of its conclusions may be detected, even by those who may not have leisure or subtlety, or metaphysical knowledge, sufficient to qualify them for a logical confutation of all its premises. If it be confessed, that the present age has some tendency to licentiousness, both in principle and practice, and that the works of sceptical writers have some tendency to favour that licentiousness; it will also be confessed, that this design is neither absurd nor unseasonable.

A celebrated writer * on human nature has observed, that "if truth be at all within the reach "of human capacity, it is certain it must lie very "deep and abstruse:" and a little after he adds, "that he would esteem it a strong presumption "against the philosophy he is going to unfold, "were it so very easy and obvious." I am so far from adopting this opinion, that I declare, in regard to the few things I have to say on human

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. i. p. 3. 4.

nature, that I should esteem it a very strong presumption against them, if they were not easy and obvious. Physical and mathematical truths are often abstruse; but facts and experiments relating to the human mind, when expressed in proper words, ought to be obvious to all. I find that those poets, historians, and novelists, who have given the most lively displays of human nature, and who abound most in sentiments easily comprehended, and readily admitted as true, are the most entertaining, as well as the most useful. How then should the philosophy of the human mind be so difficult? Indeed, if it be an author's determinate purpose to advance paradoxes, some of which are incredible, and others beyond comprehension; if he be willing to avail himself all he can of the natural ambiguity of language in supporting those paradoxes; or if he enter upon inquiries too refined for human understanding; he must often be obscure, and often unintelligible. But my views are very different. I intend only to suggest some hints for guarding the mind against errour; and these, I hope, will be found to be deduced from principles which every man of common capacity may examine by his daily experience.

It is true, that several subjects of intricate speculation are treated of in this book. But I

have endeavoured, by constant appeals to fact and experience, by illustrations and examples the most familiar I could think of, and by a plainness and perspicuity of expression which sometimes may appear too much affected, to treat of them in a way, that I hope cannot fail to render them intelligible, even to those who are not much conversant in studies of this kind. Truth, like virtue, to be loved, needs only to be seen. My principles require no disguise; on the contrary, they will, if I mistake not, be most easily admitted by those who best understand them. And I am persuaded, that the sceptical system would never have made such an alarming progress, if it had been well understood. The ambiguity of its language, and the intricacy and length of some of its fundamental investigations, have unhappily been too successful in producing that confusion of thought, and indistinctness of apprehension, in the minds both of authors and readers, which are so favourable to errour and sophistry.

Few men have ever engaged in controversy, religious, political, or philosophical, without being in some degree chargeable with misconception of the adversary's meaning. That I have never erred in this way, I dare not affirm. But I am conscious of having done every thing in my power to guard against it. The greater part of

these papers have lain by me for several years. They have been repeatedly perused by some of the acutest philosophers of the age, whom I have the honour to call my friends, and to whose advice and assistance, on this, as on other occasions, I am deeply indebted. I have availed myself all I could of reading and conversation; and endeavoured, with all the candour I am master of, to profit by every hint of improvement, and to examine to the bottom every objection, that others have offered, or myself could devise. And may I not be permitted to add, that every one of those who have perused this essay, has advised the author to publish it; and that many of them have encouraged him by this insinuation, to him the most flattering of all others, That by so doing, he would probably be of some service to the cause of truth, virtue, and mankind? In this hope he submits it to the publick. And it is this hope only that could have induced him to attempt polemical disquisition: a species of writing, which in his own judgment, is not the most creditable; which he knows, to his cost, is not the most pleasing; and of which he is well aware that it will draw upon him the resentment of a numerous, powerful, and fashionable party. But,

> Welcome for thee, fair virtue! all the past:
> For thee, fair virtue! welcome even the last.

If these pages, which he hopes none will condemn who have not read, shall throw any light on the first principles of moral science; if they shall suggest to the young and unwary, any cautions against that sophistry, and licentiousness of principle, which too much infect the conversations and compositions of the age; if they shall, in any measure, contribute to the satisfaction of any of the friends of truth and virtue; his purpose will be completely answered: and he will, to the end of his life, rejoice in the recollection of those painful hours which he passed in the examination of this most important controversy.

January, 1770.

AN

ESSAY ON TRUTH.

I PURPOSE to treat this subject in the following manner.

First, I shall endeavour to trace the several kinds of evidence and reasoning up to their first principles; with a view to ascertain the standard of truth, and explain its immutability.

Secondly, I shall show, that my sentiments on this head, however inconsistent with the genius of scepticism, and with the practice and principles of sceptical writers, are yet perfectly consistent with the genius of true philosophy, and with the practice and principles of those who are allowed to have been the most successful in the investigation of truth: concluding with some inferences or rules, by which the more important fallacies of the sceptical philosophy may be detected by every person of common sense, even though he should not possess acuteness or meta-

physical knowledge sufficient to qualify him for a logical confutation of them.

Thirdly, I shall answer some objections; and make some remarks, by way of *estimate of scepticism and sceptical writers.*

I divide my discourse in this manner, chiefly with a view to the reader's accommodation. An exact arrangement of parts is necessary to confer elegance on a whole; but I am more studious of utility than of elegance. And though my sentiments might have been exhibited in a more systematick order, I am apt to think, that the order in which they first occurred to me is the most natural, and may be the most effectual for accomplishing my purpose.

PART I.

OF THE STANDARD OF TRUTH.

THE love of truth has ever been accounted a good principle. Where it is known to prevail, we expect to find integrity and steadiness; a temper of mind favourable to every virtue, and tending in an eminent degree to publick utility. To have no concern for the truth, to be false and fallacious, is a character which no person who is not utterly abandoned would choose to bear; it is a character from which we expect nothing but levity and inconsistence. Truth seems to be considered by all mankind as something fixed, unchangeable and eternal; it may therefore be thought, that to vindicate the permanency of truth is to dispute without an adversary. And indeed, if these questions were proposed in general terms,—is there such a thing as truth? are truth and falsehood different and opposite? is truth permanent and eternal?—few persons would be hardy enough to answer in the negative. Attempts, however, have been made, sometimes through inadvertence, and sometimes (I fear)

from design, to undermine the foundations of truth, and to render their stability questionable; and these attempts have been so vigorously forwarded, and so often renewed, that they now constitute a great part of what is called *the philosophy of the human mind.*

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to give a definition of truth. But we shall endeavour to give such a description of it, as may make others understand what we mean by the word. The definitions of former writers are not so clear, nor so accurate, as could be wished. These therefore we shall overlook, without seeking either to explain or to correct them; and shall satisfy ourselves with taking notice of some of the mental phenomena that attend the perception of truth. This seems to be the safest way of introducing the subject.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Perception of Truth in general.

ON hearing these propositions, I exist; Things equal to one and the same thing are equal to one another; The sun rose to-day; There is a God; Ingratitude ought to be blamed and punished; The three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, &c. I am conscious, that my mind admits and acquiesces in them. I say, that I believe them to be true; that is, I conceive them to express something conformable to the nature of things.* Of the contrary propositions I should say, that my mind does not acquiesce in them, but disbelieves them, and conceives them to express something not conformable to the nature of things. My judgment in this case, I conceive to be the same that I should form in regard to these propositions, if I were perfectly acquainted with all nature, in all its parts, and in all its laws.†

*—ὅσῳ' ἕκαστον ὡς ἔχει τυ ειναι, οὕτω καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.
Aristo. Metaph. lib. 2. *cap.* 1.

† This remark, when applied to truth in general, is subject to certain limitations; for which see part ii. chap. 1. sect. 3.

If I be asked, what I mean by *the nature of things*, I cannot otherwise explain myself, than by saying, that there is in my mind something which induces me to think, that every thing existing in nature, is determined to exist, and to exist after a certain manner, in consequence of established laws; and that whatever is agreeable to those laws is agreeable to the nature of things, because, by those laws the nature of all things is determined. Of those laws I do not pretend to know any thing, except so far as they seem to be intimated to me by my own feelings, and by the suggestions of my own understanding. But these feelings and suggestions are such, and affect me in such a manner, that I cannot help receiving them, and trusting in them, and believing that their intimations are not fallacious, but such as I should approve if I were perfectly acquainted with every thing in the universe, and such as I may approve, and admit of, and regulate my conduct by, without danger of any inconvenience.

It is not easy on this subject to avoid identical expressions. I am not certain that I have been able to avoid them. And perhaps I might have expressed my meaning more shortly and more clearly, by saying, that I account that to be *truth* which the constitution of our nature determines us to believe, and that to be falsehood which the constitution of our nature determines us to

disbelieve.* Believing and disbelieving are simple acts of the mind; I can neither define nor describe them in words; and therefore the reader must judge of their nature from his own experience. We often believe what we afterwards find to be false; but while belief continues, we think it true; when we discover its falsity, we believe it no longer.

Hitherto I have used the word *belief* to denote an act of the mind which attends the perception of truth in general. But truths are of different kinds; some are certain, others only probable: and we ought not to call that act of the mind which attends the perception of certainty, and that which attends the perception of probability, by one and the same name. Some have called the former *conviction*, and the latter *assent*. All convictions are equally strong: but assent admits of innumerable degrees, from *moral certainty*, which is the highest degree downward, through the several stages of *opinion*, to that suspense of judgment which is called *doubt*.

We may, without absurdity, speak of probable

* I might have said more explicitly, but the meaning is the same, "that I account that to be *truth* which the "constitution of human nature determines man to believe, and that to be *falsehood* which the constitution "of human nature determines man to disbelieve."

truth, as well as of certain truth. Whatever a rational being is determined, by the constitution of his nature, to admit as probable, may be called *probable truth;* the acknowledgment of it is as universal as that rational nature, and will be as permanent. But, in this inquiry, we propose to confine ourselves chiefly to that kind of truth which may be called certain, which enforces our *conviction*, and the belief of which, in a sound mind, is not tinctured with any doubt or uncertainty.

The investigation and perception of truth is commonly ascribed to our rational faculties; and these have by some been reduced to two; reason and judgment; the former being supposed to be conversant about certain truths, the latter chiefly about probabilities. But certain truths are not all of the same kind; some being supported by one sort of evidence, and others by another: different energies of the understanding must therefore be exerted in perceiving them; and these different energies must be expressed by different names, if we would speak of them distinctly and intelligibly. The certainty of some truths, for instance, is perceived intuitively; the certainty of others is perceived, not intuitively, but in consequence of a proof. Most of the propositions of Euclid are of the latter kind; the axioms of geometry are of the former. Now, if that fa-

culty by which we perceive truth in consequence of a proof, be called *reason*, that power by which we perceive self-evident truth, ought to be distinguished by a different name. It is of little consequence what name we make choice of, provided that in choosing it we depart not from the analogy of language; and that in applying it, we avoid equivocation and ambiguity.* Some philosophers of note† have given the name of *common sense* to that faculty by which we perceive self-evident truth; and, as the term seems proper enough, we shall adopt it. But in a subject of this kind, there is great danger of our being imposed upon by words; we cannot therefore be too much upon our guard against that species of illusion. We mean to draw some important inferences from this doctrine of the distinction between reason and common sense. Now these words are not always used in the strict signification we have here assigned them: let us therefore take a view of all the similar senses in which they are commonly used, and let us explain more particularly that sense in which we are to use

* We might call the one *reason* and the other *reasoning;* but the similarity of the terms would frequently occasion both obscurity in the sense, and harshness in the sound.

† Dr. Reid, &c.

them; and thus we shall take every method in our power to secure ourselves against the impropriety of confounding our notions by the use of ambiguous and indefinite language. These philological discussions are indeed no part of philosophy; but they are very necessary to prepare us for it. "Qui ad interpretandum naturam accesserit," says Bacon, "verborum mixtam naturam, et juvamenti et nocumenti imprimis parem, distincte sciat."*

This distinction between common sense and reason is no modern discovery.† The ancient

* De Interpretatione Naturæ, sent. 9.

† The κοινονημοσύνη of the Greek Stoicks seems to mean that benevolent affection which men owe to society and to one another. Some modern moralists have called it the *publick sense*. But the notion or idea we mean to express by the term *common sense* is quite different.

The *sensus communis* of the Latins hath several significations. 1. It denotes this *publick sense*, or κοινονημοσύνη. *See Shaftesbury's essays on the freedom of wit and humour, part* 3. *sect.* 1. *note.* 2. It denotes that experience and knowledge of life which is acquired by living in society. Thus Horace seems to use it, *lib.* 1 *satir.* 3 *lin.* 66 And thus Quintilian, speaking of the advantages of a publick education: "Sensum ipsum qui communis dicitur, ubi discet, cum se a congressu, qui non hominibus solum, sed mutis quoque animalibus naturalis est, segregarit;" *lib.* 1. *cap.* 2. 3. It seems to signify that

geometricians were all acquainted with it. Aristotle treats of self-evident principles in many parts of his works, particularly in the fourth book of his Metaphysicks, and in the first book of his latter Analyticks. He calls them, *axioms* or *dignities*, *principles* and *common sentiments*;* and says of them, "that they are known by their "own evidence;† that except some first princi- "ples be taken for granted, there can be neither

instinctive persuasion of truth which arises from intuitive evidence, and is the foundation of all reasoning:

"Corpus enim per se communis deliquat esse
"Sensus: quo nisi prima fides fundata valebit,
"Haud erit occultis de rebus quo referentes
"Confirmare animi quicquam ratione queamus."

Lucretius, lib. 1. *ver.* 423.

* Ἀξιωματα, Αρχαι, Κοιναι δοξαι.—Λέγω δε ἀποδεικτικας, καὶ τας κοιναι δοξας, ἐξ ὧν ἅπαντες δεικνυσι· οἷον, ὅτι πᾶν αναγκαῖον ἤ φαναι, ἢ ἀποφάναι· καὶ ἀδυνατον ἅμα εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι.

Metaphys. lib. 3. *cap.* 2.

† *Analytic, lib.* 2. *cap.* 16. Of these first principles, a French Peripatetick, who wrote about the beginning of the last century, expresses himself thus: "Ces princi- "pes portent le nom de communs, non seulement parce "qu'ils servent à plusieurs sciences, mais aussi parce "que *l'intelligence en est commune à tous.* On les appelle "aussi *dignitez* et *notions communes:* à scavoir, dignitez, "quasi comme dignes entre toutes les autres qu'on y "adiouste foy, à cause de la grande excellence de leur

" reason nor reasoning;* that it is impossible that " every truth should admit of proof, otherwise " proof would extend *in infinitum*, which is in- " compatible with its nature;† and that if ever " men attempt to prove a first principle, it is be- " cause they are ignorant of the nature of proof."‖

The word *reason* is used in different senses.

" clartè et evidence; et notions communes, pour ce " qu'ils sont si connus, qu'aussi tost que la significa- " tion des termes dont ils sont composez est entenduë, " sans discourir ny argumenter davantage dessus, cha- " cun entend naturellement leur verité; si ce n'est quel- " que hebeté privé de raison; lequel je revoye à Ari- " stote, qui prononce, que ceux qui doutent, qu'il " faut reverer les Dieux, ou aymer les parents, meri- " tent d'estre punis; et que ceux qui doutent que la " nege est blanche ont besoin de sens; et à Averroes, " qui dit, que ceux qui ne sçauroient distinguer ce qui " est connue par soy d'avec ce qui ne l'est pas, sont inca- " pables de philosopher; et que ne pouvoir connoistre ces " principes, procede de quelque defaut de nature, ou de " peu d'exercise, ou d'une mauvaise accoustumance en- " racinee."—[*Corps de toute la Philosophie de Theophraste Bouju, p.* 79.

* Μηδεν γαρ τιθεντες, ἀναιροῦσι το διαλέγεσθαι, καὶ ὅλως λογον.
Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 2. *cap.* 6.

† "Ολως μεν γαρ ἁπαντων ἀδύνατον ἀπόδειξιν ειναι· εις απειρον γαρ αν βαδίζοι· ὥστε μηδ' ὑυτως ειναι ἀποδειξιν.
Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 4. *cap.* 4.

‖ Αξιουσι δε καὶ τοῦτο ἀποδεικνυναι τινες δι ἀπαιδευσιαν· εστι

1. It is used to signify that quality of human nature which distinguishes man from the inferiour animals. Man is called a *reasonable* being, and the brutes are said to be *irrational*. But the faculty of reason, taking the word in a strict sense, is perhaps not more characteristical of the nature of man, than his moral faculty, or his imagination, or his power of artificial language, or his risibility. Reason, in this acceptation, seems to be a general name for all the intellectual powers, as distinguished from the sensitive part of our constitution. 2. Every thing that is called truth is said to be perceived by reason: by reason we are said to perceive, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles: and we are also said to perceive, by reason, that it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be. But these truths are of different kinds; and therefore the energies of understanding, to which they are referred, ought to be called by different names. 3. The power of invention is sometimes ascribed to reason. LOCKE tells us, that it is reason which *discovers* and *arranges* the several intermediate proofs in an argument; an office which, according

γαρ ἀπαιδευσια, το μη γινωσκειν τινων δεῖ ζητεῖν ἀποδειξιν, καὶ τινων ου δεῖ. *Arist. Metaphys. lib. 4. cap. 4.*

I cite these authorities, that I may not be supposed to affect either an uncommon doctrine, or uncommon modes of expression.

to the common use of words, is to be referred, not to reason, but to imagination. 4. Reason, as implying a faculty not marked by any other name, is used by those who are most accurate in distinguishing, to signify that power of the human mind by which we draw inferences, or by which we are convinced, that a relation belongs to two ideas, on account of our having found, that these ideas bear certain relations to other ideas. In a word, it is that faculty which enables us, from relations or ideas that are known, to investigate such as are unknown; and without which we never could proceed in the discovery of truth a single step beyond first principles or intuitive axioms. And it is in this last sense we are to use the word *reason* in the course of this inquiry.

The term *common sense* has also several different significations. 1. Sometimes it seems to be synonymous with prudence. Thus we say, that a man has a large stock of common sense, who is quick in perceiving remote consequences, and thence instantaneously determines concerning the propriety of present conduct. 2. We often meet with persons of great sagacity in most of the ordinary affairs of life, and very capable of accurate reasoning, who yet, without any bad intention, commit blunders in regard to decorum; by saying or doing what is offensive to their

company, and inconsistent with their own character: and this we are apt to impute to a defect in common sense. But it seems rather to be owing to a defect in that kind of sensibility, or sympathy, by which we suppose ourselves in the situations of others, adopt their sentiments, and in a manner perceive their thoughts; and which is indeed the foundation of good breeding.* It is by this secret, and sudden, and (to those who are unacquainted with it) inexplicable, communication of feelings, that a man is enabled to avoid what would appear incongruous or offensive. They who are prompted by inclination, or obliged by necessity, to study the art of recommending themselves to others, acquire a wonderful facility in perceiving and avoiding all possible ways of giving offence; which is a proof, that this kind of sensibility may be improved by habit: although there are, no doubt, in respect of this, as well as of some other modifications of perception, original and constitutional differences in the frame of different minds. 3. Some men are distinguished by an uncommon acuteness in discovering the characters of others: they seem to read the soul in the countenance, and with a single glance to penetrate the deepest recesses of the heart. In

* See Smith's theory of moral sentiments, sect. 1.

their presence, the hypocrite is detected, notwithstanding his specious outside; the gay effrontery of the coxcomb cannot conceal his insignificance; and the man of merit appears conspicuous under all the disguises of an ungainly modesty. This talent is sometimes called *common sense;* but improperly. It is far from being common; it is even exceedingly rare: it is to be found in men who are not remarkable for any other mental excellence; and we often see those who in other respects are judicious enough, quite destitute of it. 4. Neither ought every common opinion to be referred to common sense. Modes in dress, religion, and conversation, however absurd in themselves, may suit the notions or the taste of a particular people: but none of us will say, that it is agreeable to common sense, to worship more gods than one; to believe that one and the same body may be in ten thousand different places at the same time;* to like a face the better because it is painted, or to dislike a person because he does not lisp in his pronunciation. Lastly, The term *common sense* has been used by some philosophers to signify that power of the mind which perceives truth or commands belief, not by progressive argumentation, but by an instantaneous and instinc

* Transubstantiation.

tive impulse: derived neither from education nor from habit, but from nature; acting independently on our will, whenever its object is presented, according to an established law, and therefore not improperly called *sense;* and acting in a similar manner upon all mankind, and therefore properly called *common sense*. It is in this signification that the term *common sense* is used in the present inquiry.

That there is a real and essential difference between these two faculties; that common sense cannot be accounted for, by being called the perfection of reason, nor reason, by being resolved into common sense, will perhaps appear from the following remarks. 1. We are conscious, from internal feeling, that the energy of understanding which perceives intuitive truth, is different from that other energy which unites a conclusion with a first principle, by a gradual chain of intermediate relations. We believe the truth of an investigated conclusion, because we can assign a reason for our belief: we believe an intuitive principle, without being able to assign any other reason but this, that we know it to be true; or that the law of our nature, or the constitution of the human understanding, determines us to believe it. 2. We cannot discern any *necessary* connection between reason and common

sense: they are indeed generally connected; but we can conceive a being indued with the one who is destitute of the other. Nay, we often find, that this is in fact the case. In dreams, we sometimes reason without common sense. Through a defect of common sense, we adopt absurd principles; but supposing our principles true, our reasoning is often unexceptionable. The same thing may be observed in certain kinds of madness. A man who believes himself made of glass, shall yet reason very justly concerning the means of preserving his supposed brittleness from flaws and fractures. It deserves also to be remarked, that a distinction similar to the present is acknowledged by the vulgar, who speak of mother wit, as something different from the deductions of reason, and the refinements of science When puzzled with argument, they have recourse to their common sense, and acquiesce in it so steadily, as to render all the arts of the logician ineffectual. "I am confuted, but not convinced," is an apology sometimes offered, when one has nothing to oppose to the arguments of the antagonist, but the original undisguised feelings of his mind. This apology is indeed very inconsistent with the dignity of philosophick pride; which, taking for granted that nothing exceeds the limits of human capacity, professes to con-

fute whatever it cannot believe, and which is still more difficult, to believe whatever it cannot confute: but this apology may be perfectly consistent with sincerity and candour; and with that principle of which Pope says, that "though no science "it is fairly worth the seven."

Thus far I have endeavoured to distinguish those two powers of our rational nature, to which I give the names *reason* and *common sense*. Their connection and mutual dependence, and the extent of their respective jurisdictions, I now proceed more particularly to investigate. I ought perhaps to make an apology for these, and some other metaphorical expressions. And indeed it were to be wished that in all matters of science, they could be laid aside; for the indiscreet use of metaphor has done great harm, by leading philosophers to mistake verbal analogies for real ones; and, often, too, by giving plausibility to nonsense, as well as by disguising very plain doctrines with an affected pomp of highsounding words and gaudy images. But in the philosophy of the human mind, it is impossible to keep clear of metaphor; because we cannot speak intelligibly of immaterial things, without continual allusions to matter, and its qualities. All I need to say further on this head is, that I mean not by these metaphors to impose upon the reader; and

that I shall do my utmost to prevent their imposing upon myself.

It is strange to observe, with what reluctance some people acknowledge the power of instinct. That man is governed by reason, the brutes by instinct, is a favourite topick with certain philosophers; who like other froward children, spurn the hand that leads them; and desire above all things, to be left at their own disposal. Were this boast founded on truth, it might be supposed to mean little more, than that man is governed by himself, and the brutes by their Maker.* But, luckily for man, it is not founded in truth, but in ignorance and inattention. Our instincts, as well as our rational powers, are far superiour, both in number and dignity, to those which the brutes enjoy; and it were well for us, on many occasions, if we laid our systems aside, and were more attentive to these impulses of nature wherein reason has no part. Far be it from me to speak with disrespect of any of the gifts of God; every work of his is good; but the best things, when abused, may become pernicious. Reason is a noble faculty, and, when kept within its proper

* And reason raise o'er instinct as you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis man.
Pope's Essay on Man, ep. 3. *ver.* 99.

sphere, and applied to useful purposes, proves a means of exalting human creatures almost to the rank of superiour beings. But this faculty has been much perverted, often to vile, and often to insignificant purposes; sometimes chained like a slave or malefactor, and sometimes soaring in forbidden and unknown regions. No wonder, then, if it has been frequently made the instrument of seducing and bewildering mankind, and of rendering philosophy contemptible.

In the science of body, glorious discoveries have been made by a right use of reason. When men are once satisfied to take things as they find them; when they believe nature upon her bare declaration, without suspecting her of any design to impose upon them; when their utmost ambition is to be her servants and interpreters; then, and not till then, will philosophy prosper. But of those who have applied themselves to the science of human nature, it may truly be said, (of many of them at least), that too much reasoning hath made them mad. Nature speaks to us by our external, as well as by our internal, senses; it is strange, that we should believe her in the one case, and not in the other; it is most strange, that supposing her fallacious, we should think ourselves capable of detecting the cheat. Common sense tells me, that the ground on

which I stand is hard, material and solid, and has a real, separate, independent existence. BERKELEY and HUME tell me, that I am imposed upon in this matter: for that the ground under my feet is really an idea in my mind; that its very essence consists in being perceived; and that the same instant it ceases to be perceived, it must also cease to exist; in a word, that *to be* and *to be perceived*, when predicated of the ground, the sun, the starry heavens, or any corporeal object, signify precisely the same thing. Now, if my common sense be mistaken, who shall ascertain and correct the mistake? Our reason, it is said. Are then the inferences of reason in this instance clearer, and more decisive than the dictates of common sense? By no means: I still trust to my common sense as before; and I feel that I must do so. But supposing the inferences of the one faculty as clear and decisive as the dictates of the other; yet who will assure me, that my reason is less liable to mistake than my common sense? And if reason be mistaken, what shall we say? Is this mistake to be rectified by a second reasoning, as liable to mistake as the first? In a word, we must deny the distinction between truth and falsehood, adopt universal scepticism, and wander without end from one maze of uncertainty to another; a state of mind

so miserable, that Milton makes it one of the torments of the damned; or else we must suppose, that one of these faculties is of higher authority than the other; and that either reason ought to submit to common sense, or common sense to reason, whenever a variance happens between them: in other words, that no doctrine ought to be admitted as true that exceeds belief, and contradicts a first principle.

It has been said that every inquiry in philosophy ought to begin with doubt; that nothing is to be taken for granted, and nothing believed, without proof. If this be admitted, it must also be admitted, that reason is the ultimate judge of truth, to which common sense must continually act in subordination. But this I cannot admit; because I am able to prove the contrary by incontestable evidence. I am able to prove, that, "except we believe many things without proof, "we never can believe any thing at all; for that "all sound reasoning must ultimately rest on the "principles of common sense; that is, on princi-"ples intuitively certain, or intuitively probable; "and consequently, that common sense is the "ultimate judge of truth, to which reason must "continually act in subordination." This I mean to prove by a fair induction of particulars.

CHAPTER II.

All Reasoning terminates in First Principles. All Evidence ultimately Intuitive. Common Sense the Standard of Truth to Man.

IN this induction, we cannot comprehend all sorts of evidence, and modes of reasoning; but we shall endeavour to investigate the origin of those which are the most important, and of the most extensive influence in science, and common life;* beginning with the simplest and

* That the induction here given is sufficiently comprehensive, will appear from the following analysis.

All the objects of the human understanding may be reduced to two classes, viz. *abstract ideas*, and *things really existing*.

Of *abstract ideas, and their relations*, all our knowledge is *certain*, being founded on MATHEMATICAL EVIDENCE (*a*); which comprehends, 1. intuitive evidence, and, 2. the evidence of strict demonstration.

We judge of *things really existing;* either, 1. from *our own experience;* or, 2. from *the experience of other men.*

1. Judging of *real existences* from *our own experience*, we attain either *certainty* or *probability*. Our knowledge is

(*a*) Sect. 1.

clearest, and advancing gradually to those which are more complicated, or less perspicuous.

SECTION I.

Of Mathematical Reasoning.

THE evidence that takes place in pure mathematicks, produces the highest assurance and certainty in the mind of him who attends to, and understands it; for no principles are admitted into this science, but such as are either self-evident, or susceptible of demonstration. Should

certain when supported by the evidence, 1. Of SENSE EXTERNAL (*b*) or INTERNAL (*c*); 2. Of MEMORY (*d*); 3. Of LEGITIMATE INFERENCES OF THE CAUSE FROM THE EFFECT (*e*). Our knowledge is *probable*, when, *from* facts already experienced, we argue, 1. *to* facts OF THE SAME KIND (*f*) not experienced, and, 2. *to* facts OF A SIMILAR KIND (*g*) not experienced.

2. Judging of *real existences* from *the experience of other men*, we have the EVIDENCE OF THEIR TESTIMONY (*h*). The mode of understanding produced by that evidence is properly called *faith;* and this Faith sometimes amounts to *probable opinion*, and sometimes arises even to *absolute certainty*.

(*b*) Sect. 2. (*c*) Sect. 3. (*d*) Sect. 4. (*e*) Sect. 5. (*f*) Sect. 6. (*g*) Sect. 7. (*h*) Sect. 8.

a man refuse to assent to a demonstrated conclusion, the world would impute the refusal, either to want of understanding, or to want of honesty: for every person of understanding feels, that by mathematical demonstration he must be convinced whether he will or not. There are two kinds of mathematical demonstration. The first is called *direct;* and takes place when a conclusion is inferred from premises that render it necessarily true: and this perhaps is a more perfect, or at least a simpler, kind of proof, than the other; but both are equally convincing. The other kind is called *indirect*, *apagogical*, or *ducens ad absurdum;* and takes place, when, by supposing a proposition false, we are led into an absurdity, which there is no other way to avoid, than by supposing the proposition true. In this manner it is proved, that the proposition is not, and cannot be, false; in other words, that it is a certain truth. Every step in a mathematical proof, either is self-evident, or must have been formerly demonstrated; and every demonstration does finally resolve itself into intuitive or self-evident principles, which it is impossible to prove, and equally impossible to disbelieve. These first principles constitute the foundation of mathematicks: if you disprove them, you overturn the whole science: if you refuse to believe them, you cannot

consistently with such refusal, acquiesce in any mathematical truth whatsoever. But you may as well attempt to blow out the sun, as to disprove these principles: and if you say, that you do not believe them,* you will be charged either with falsehood or with folly; you may as well hold your hand in the fire, and say that you feel no pain. By the law of our nature, we must feel in the one case, and believe in the other; even as, by the same law, we must adhere to the earth, and cannot fall headlong to the clouds.

But who will pretend to prove a mathematical axiom, That a whole is greater than a part, or, That things equal to one and the same thing are equal to one another? Every proof must be more evident than the thing to be proved. Can you then assume any more evident principle, from which the truth of these axioms may be consequentially inferred? It is impossible; because they are

* Si quelque opiniastre les nie de la voix, on ne l'en sçauriot empescher; mais cela ne luy est pas permis interieurement en son esprit, parce que sa lumiere naturelle y repugne, qui est la partie où se rapporte la demonstration et le syllogisme, et non aux paroles externes. Au moyen de quoy s'il se trouve quelqu'un qui ne les puisse entendre, cettuy-là est incapable de discipline.

Dialectique de Boujou, liv. 3. ch. 3.

already as evident as any thing can be.* You may bring the matter to the test of the senses,

* Different opinions have prevailed concerning the nature of these geometrical axioms. Some suppose, that an axiom is not self-evident, except it imply an identical proposition; that therefore this axiom, *it is impossible for the same thing, at the same time, to be and not to be*, is the only axiom that can properly be called intuitive; and that all those other propositions commonly called *axioms*, ought to be demonstrated by being resolved into this fundamental axiom. But if this could be done, mathematical truth would not be one whit more certain than it is. Those other axioms produce absolute certainty, and produce it immediately, without any process of thought or reasoning that we can discover. And if the truth of a proposition be clearly and certainly perceived by all men without proof, and if no proof whatever could make it more clear or more certain, it seems captious not to allow that proposition the name of *intuitive axiom*. Others suppose, that though, the demonstration of mathematical axioms is not absolutely necessary, yet that these axioms are susceptible of demonstration, and ought to be demonstrated to those who require it. Dr. Barrow is of this opinion. So is Appollonius; who, agreeably to it, has attempted a demonstration of this axiom, That *things equal to one and the same thing are equal to one another*. But whatever account we make of these opinions, they affect not our doctrine. However far the demonstration of axioms may be carried, it must at last terminate in *one* principle of common sense, if not in *many*; which principle we must believe without proof, whether we will or no.

by laying a few halfpence and farthings upon the table; but the evidence of sense is not more unquestionable, than that of abstract intuitive truth; and therefore the former evidence, though to one ignorant of the meaning of the terms, it might serve to explain and illustrate the latter, can never prove it. But not to rest any thing on the signification *we* affix to the word *proof*; and to remove every possibility of doubt as to this matter, let us suppose, that the evidence of external sense is more unquestionable than that of abstract intuitive truth, and that every intuitive principle in mathematicks may thus be brought to the test of sense; and if we cannot call the evidence of sense a proof, let us call it a confirmation of the abstract principle: yet what do we gain by this method of illustration? We only discover, that the evidence of abstract intuitive truth is resolvable into, or may be illustrated by, the evidence of sense. And it will be seen in the next section, that we believe in the evidence of external sense, not because we can prove it to be true, but because the law of our nature determines us to believe in it without proof. So that in whatever way we view this subject, the point we mean to illustrate appears certain, namely, "That all mathematical truth is founded in cer-"tain first principles which common sense, or

" instinct, or the constitution of the human un-
" derstanding, or the law of rational nature, com-
" pels us to believe without proof, whether we
" will or not."

Nor would the foundation of mathematicks be in the least degree more stable, if these axioms did admit of proof, or were all resolvable into one primary axiom expressed by an identical proposition. As the case now stands, we are absolutely certain of their truth; and absolute certainty is all that demonstration can produce. We are convinced by a proof, because our constitution is such, that we must be convinced by it: and we believe a self-evident axiom, because our constitution is such, that we must believe it. You ask, why I believe what is self-evident? I may as well ask, why you believe what is proved? Neither question admits of an answer; or rather, to both questions the answer is the same, namely, Because I must believe it.

Whether our belief in these cases be agreeable to the eternal relations and fitnesses of things, and such as we should entertain if we were perfectly acquainted with all the laws of nature, is a question which no person of a sound mind can have any scruple to answer, with the fullest assurance, in the affirmative. Certain it is, our constitution is so framed, that we must believe to be

true, and conformable to universal nature, that which is intimated to us, as such, by the original suggestions of our own understanding. If these are fallacious, it is the Deity who makes them so; and therefore we can never rectify, or even detect, the fallacy. But we cannot even suppose them fallacious, without violating our nature; nor, if we acknowledge a God, without impiety; for in this supposition it is implied, that we suppose the Deity a deceiver. Nor can we, consistently with such a supposition, acknowledge any distinction between truth and falsehood, or believe that one inch is less than ten thousand miles, or even that we ourselves exist.

I am inclined to think, though I have not as yet so thoroughly examined the notion as to be able to prove it, that all mathematical truth is resolvable into identical propositions. But yet I do not see, that there is any impropriety in saying, (according to my use of the terms), that mathematical truth rests on certain principles (or some one principle) of common sense, which the law of our nature, (or of rational nature) determines us to believe. For, might we not have been so framed, as not to perceive the coincidence of the predicate, with the subject, of an identical proposition? And if so, is not our power of perceiving that coincidence a part of the con-

stitution of our nature? All beings indued with reason have this power as well as we; for we cannot conceive understanding or reason to be, where this power is not. But the existence of rational creatures is an effect of that constitution of things, which the good providence of God has been pleased to establish.*

SECTION II.

Of the Evidence of External Sense.

Another class of truths producing conviction, and absolute certainty, are those which depend upon the evidence of the external senses; hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling. On this evidence is founded all our knowledge of external or material things; and therefore all conclusions in natural philosophy, and all those prudential considerations which regard the preservation of our body, as it is liable to be affected by the sensible qualities of matter, must finally be resolved into this principle, that things are as our senses represent them. When I touch a stone, I am conscious of a certain sensation, which I call a *sensation of hardness*. But this

* See part iii. chap. 1. sect. 3.

sensation is not hardness itself, nor any thing like hardness: it is nothing more than a sensation or feeling in my mind; accompanied, however, with an irresistible belief, that this sensation is excited by the application of an external and hard substance to a certain part of my body. This belief as certainly accompanies the sensation, as the sensation accompanies the application of the stone to my organ of sense. I believe, with as much assurance, and as unavoidably, that the external thing exists, and is hard, as I believe that I receive, and am conscious of, the sensation of hardness; or, to speak more strictly, the sensation which by experience I know to be the sign of my touching a hard body.* Now, why do I believe that this sensation is a real sensation, and really felt by me? Because my constitution is such that I must believe so. And why do I believe, in consequence of my receiving this sensation, that I touch an external object, really existing, material, and hard? The answer is the same: the matter is incapable of proof: I believe, because I must believe. Can I avoid believing, that I really am conscious of receiving this sensation? No. Can I avoid believing, that the external thing exists, and has a certain qua-

* See Dr. Reid's inquiry into the human mind, chap. v. sect. 3.

lity, which fits it, on being applied to my hand, to excite a certain feeling or sensation in my mind? No: I must believe this, whether I will or not. Nor could I divest myself of this belief, though my life and future happiness depended on the consequence. To believe our senses, therefore, is according to the law of our nature; and we are prompted to this belief by instinct, or common sense. I am as certain, that at present I am in a house, and not in the open air; that I see by the light of the sun, and not by the light of a candle; that I feel the ground hard under my feet; and that I lean against a real material table, as I can be of the truth of any geometrical axiom, or of any demonstrated conclusion; nay, I am as certain of all this as of my own existence. But I cannot prove by argument, that there is such a thing as matter in the world, or even that I myself exist: and yet I know as assuredly, that I do exist, and that there is a real material sun, and a real material world, with mountains, trees, houses, and animals, existing separately, and independently on me and my faculties; I say, I know all this with as much assurance of conviction, as the most irrefragable demonstration could produce. Is it unreasonable to believe in these cases *without* proof? Then, I affirm, it is equally unreasonable to believe in any case *with* proof.

Our belief in either case is unavoidable, and according to the law of our nature; and if it be unreasonable to think according to the law of our nature, it must be equally unreasonable to adhere to the earth, to be nourished with food, or to die when the head is separated from the body. It is indeed easy to affirm any thing, provided a man can reconcile himself to hypocrisy and falsehood. A man may affirm, that he sees with the soles of his feet, that he believes there is no material world, that he doubts of his own existence. He may as well say, that he believes one and two to be equal to six, a part to be greater than a whole, a circle to be a triangle: and that it may be possible for the same thing, at the same time, to be and not to be.

But it is said, that our senses do often impose upon us; and that by means of reason we are enabled to detect the imposture, and to judge rightly even where our senses give us wrong information; that therefore our belief in the evidence of sense is not instinctive or intuitive, but such as may be either confuted or confirmed by reasoning. We shall acknowledge that our senses do often impose upon us: but a little attention will convince us, that reason, though it may be employed in correcting the present fallacious sensation, by referring it to a former sensation, received by us, or by other men, is not the ulti-

mate judge in this matter; for that all such reasoning is resolvable into this principle of common sense, That things are what our external senses represent them. One instance will suffice at present for illustration of this point.*

After having looked a moment at the sun, I see a black, or perhaps a luminous, circle swimming in the air, apparently at the distance of two or three feet from my eyes. That I see such a circle, is certain; that I believe I see it, is certain; that I believe its appearance to be owing to some cause, is also certain:—thus far there can be no imposture, and there is no supposition of any. Suppose me from this appearance to conclude, that a real, solid, tangible or visible, round substance, of a black or yellow colour, is actually swimming in the air before me; in this I should be mistaken. How then come I to know that I am mistaken? I may know it in several ways. 1. I stretch out my hand to the place where the circle seems to be floating in the air; and having *felt* nothing, I am instantly convinced that there is no *tangible* substance in that place. Is this conviction an inference of reason? No; it is a conviction arising from our innate propensity to believe that things are as our senses represent

* See part ii. chap. 1. sect. 2.

them. By this innate or instinctive propensity I believe that what I touch exists; by the same propensity I believe, that where I touch nothing, there nothing tangible does exist. If in the present case I were suspicious of the veracity of my senses, I should neither believe nor disbelieve. 2. I turn my eyes towards the opposite quarter of the heavens; and having still observed the same circle floating before them, and knowing by experience, that the motion of bodies placed at a distance from me does not follow or depend on the motion of my body, I conclude that the appearance is owing, not to a real, external, corporeal object, but to some disorder in my organ of sight. Here reasoning is employed; but where does it terminate? It terminates in experience, which I have acquired by means of my senses. But if I believed them fallacious, if I believed things to be otherwise than my senses represent them, I should never, by their means, acquire experience at all. Or, 3. I apply, first to one man, then to another, and then to a third, who all assure me, that they perceive no such circle floating in the air, and at the same time inform me of the true cause of the appearance. I believe their declaration, either because I have had experience of their veracity, or because I have an innate propensity to credit testimony. To gain experience

implies a belief in the evidence of sense, which reasoning cannot account for; and a propensity to credit testimony previous to experience or reasoning, is equally unaccountable.* So that although we acknowledge some of our senses, in some instances, deceitful, our detection of the deceit, whether by the evidence of our other senses, or by a retrospect to our past experience, or by our trusting to the testimony of other men, does still imply, that we do and must believe our senses previously to all reasoning.†

A human creature, born with a propensity to disbelieve his senses, would be as helpless as if he wanted them. To his own preservation he could contribute nothing; and, after ages of being, would remain as destitute of knowledge and experience, as when he began to be.

Sometimes we seem to distrust the evidence of our senses, when in reality we only doubt whether we have that evidence. I may appeal to any man, if he were thoroughly convinced that he had really when awake seen and conversed with a ghost, whether any reasoning would convince him that it was a delusion. Reasoning might lead him to suspect that he had been dreaming, and

* See sect. 8. of this chapter.

† See part ii. chap. 1. sect. 2.

therefore to doubt whether or not he had the evidence of sense; but if he were assured that he had that evidence, no arguments would shake his belief.

SECTION III.

Of the Evidence of Internal Sense, or Consciousness.

By attending to what passes in my mind, I know, not only that it exists, but that it exerts certain powers of action and perception; which, on account either of diversity in their objects, or of a difference in their manner of operating, I consider as distinct faculties; and which I find it expedient to distinguish by different names, that I may be able to speak of them so as to be understood. Thus I am conscious that at one time I exert memory, at another time imagination: sometimes I believe, sometimes I doubt: the performance of certain actions, and the indulgence of certain affections, is attended with an agreeable feeling of a peculiar kind, which I call *moral approbation;* different actions and affections excite the opposite feeling, of *moral disapprobation:* to relieve distress, I feel to be meritorious and praiseworthy; to pick a pocket, I know to be blamable, and worthy of punishment: I am con-

scious that some actions are in my power, and that others are not; that when I neglect to do what I ought to do, and can do, I deserve to be punished; and that when I act necessarily, or upon unavoidable and irresistible compulsion, I deserve neither punishment nor blame. Of all these sentiments I am as conscious, and as certain, as of my own existence. I cannot prove that I feel them, neither to myself, nor to others; but that I do really feel them, is as evident to me as demonstration could make it. I cannot prove, in regard to my moral feelings, that they are conformable to any extrinsick and eternal relations of things; but I know that my constitution necessarily determines me to believe them just and genuine, even as it determines me to believe that I myself exist, and that things are as my external senses represent them. An expert logician might puzzle me with words, and propose difficulties I could not solve: but he might as well attempt to convince me, that I do not exist, as that I do not feel what I am conscious I do feel. And if he could induce me to suspect that I may be mistaken, what standard of truth could he propose to me, more evident, and of higher authority in these matters, than my own feelings? Shall I believe his testimony, and disbelieve my own sensations? Shall I admit his reasons, because I cannot confute them, although common sense tells me they

are false? Shall I suffer the ambiguities of artificial language to prevail against the clear, the intelligible, the irresistible voice of nature?

We cannot disbelieve the evidence of internal sense, without offering violence to our nature. And if we be led into such disbelief, or distrust, by the sophistry of pretended philosophers, we act just as wisely as a mariner would do, who should suffer himself to be persuaded, that the polestar is continually changing its place, but that the wind always blows from the same quarter. Common sense, or instinct, which prompts men to trust to their own feelings, hath in all ages continued the same: but the interests, pursuits, and abilities of philosophers, are susceptible of endless variety; and their theories vary accordingly.

Let it not be thought, that these objects and faculties of internal sensation are things too evanescent to be attended to, or that their evidence is too weak to produce a steady and well grounded conviction. They are more necessary to our happiness than even the powers and objects of external sense; yea, they are no less necessary to our existence. What can be of greater consequence to man, than his moral sentiments, his reason, his memory, his imagination? What more interesting, than to know, whether his notions of

duty and of truth be the dictates of his nature, that is, the voice of God, or the positive institutions of men? What is it to which a wise man will pay more attention than to his reason and conscience, those divine monitors, whereby he is to judge even of religion itself? The generality of mankind, however ignorant of the received distinctions and explications of their internal powers, do yet by their conduct declare, that they feel their influence, and acknowledge their authenticity. Every instance of their being governed by a principle of moral obligation, is a proof of this. They believe an action to be lawful in the sight of God, when they are conscious of a sentiment of lawfulness attending the performance of it: they believe a certain mode of conduct to be incumbent on them in certain circumstances, because a notion of duty arises in their mind, when they contemplate that conduct in relation to those circumstances: "I ought to be "grateful for a favour received. Why? Because "my conscience tells me so. How do you know "that you ought to do that of which your con- "science enjoins the performance? I can give no "further reason for it; but I *feel* that such is my "duty." Here the investigation must stop; or, if carried a little further, it must return to this point: "I know that I ought to do what my con-

" science enjoins, because God is the author of " my constitution; and I obey his will, when " I act according to the principles of my consti- " tution. Why do you obey the will of God? Be- " cause it is my duty. How know you that? Be- " cause my conscience tell me so," &c.

If a man were sceptical in this matter, it would not be in the power of argument to cure him. * Such a man could not be said to have any moral principle distinct from the hope of reward, the fear of punishment, or the force of custom. But that there is in human nature a moral principle

* All that is here meant, in regard to moral obligation, is that morality, like other sciences, is founded on certain first principles, and that the dictates of conscience are to every good man the highest authority in matters of duty. I see no paradox in this doctrine; which, if I mistake not, is admitted by the best divines and moralists, and by mankind in general. How far this doctrine may be affected by what casuists have urged in regard to an erroneous conscience, or by the opinions of some philosophers concerning the mutability of moral sentiment, and its liableness to be perverted by education and habit, is an inquiry of very great extent, which I have not here entered upon at all, (though I have written many a page on the subject), because I intended long ago, and do still intend, when I shall have health and leisure, to make it the argument of another book. See below, part ii. ch. 1. sect. 3. § 4.

distinct from those motives, has been felt and acknowledged by men of all ages and nations; and indeed was never denied or doubted, except by a few metaphysicians, who through want either of sense or of honesty, found themselves disposed to deny the existence, or question the authenticity, of our moral feelings. In the celebrated dispute concerning liberty and necessity, some of the advocates for the latter have either maintained, that we have no sense of moral liberty; or, granting that we have such a sense, have endeavoured to prove it deceitful. Now, if we be conscious, that we have a sense of moral liberty, it is certainly as absurd to argue against the existence of that sense, as against the reality of any other matter of fact. And if the real existence of that sense be acknowledged, it cannot be proved to be deceitful by any arguments which may not be applied to prove other powers of our nature deceitful, and, consequently, to show, that man ought not to believe any thing that depends, for its evidence, on these internal suggestions. But more of this afterwards.

We have no other direct evidence than this of consciousness, or internal sensation, for the existence and identity of our own soul.* I exist; I am

* I say, *direct* evidence. But there are not wanting other irrefragable, though indirect, evidences of the

the same being to-day I was yesterday, and twenty years ago; this principle, or being, within me, that thinks and acts, is one permanent and individual principle, distinct from all other principles,

existence of the human soul. Such is that which results from a comparison of the known qualities of matter with the phenomena of animal motion and thought. The further we carry our inquiries into matter, the more we are convinced of its incapacity to begin motion. And as to thought, and its several modes, if we think that they *might* be produced by any possible arrangement of the minute particles of matter, we form a supposition as arbitrary, as little warranted by experience or evidence of any kind, and as contrary to the rules that determine us in all our rational conjectures, as if we were to suppose, that diamonds *might* be produced from the smoke of a candle, or that men *might* grow like mushrooms out of the earth. There must then, in all animals, and especially in man, be a principle, not only distinct and different from body, but in some respects of a quite contrary nature. To ask, whether the Deity, without uniting body with spirit, could create thinking matter, is just such a question, as, whether he could create a being essentially active and essentially inactive, capable of beginning motion, and at the same time incapable of beginning motion: questions, which, if we allow experience to be a rational ground of knowledge, we need not scruple to answer in the negative. For these questions, according to the best lights that our rational faculties can afford, seem to us to refer to the production of an effect

beings, or things; these are dictates of internal sensation natural to man, and universally acknowledged: and they are of so great importance, that while we doubt of their truth, we can hardly

as truly impossible, as round squareness, hot cold, black whiteness, or true falsehood.

Yet I am inclined to think, it is not by this argument that the generality of mankind are led to acknowledge the existence of their own minds. An evidence more direct, much more obvious, and not less convincing, every man discovers in the instinctive suggestions of nature. We perceive the existence of our souls by intuition; and this I believe is the only way in which the vulgar perceive it. But their conviction is not on that account the weaker; on the contrary, they would think the man mad who should seem to entertain any doubts on this subject.

One of the first thoughts that occur to Milton's Adam, when "new waked from soundest sleep," is to inquire after the cause of his existence:

"Thou sun, said I, fair light!
"And thou, enlighten'd earth, so fresh and gay!
"Ye hills, and dales, ye rivers, woods, and plains,
"And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
"Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here:
"Not of myself; by some great maker then,
"In goodness and in power preeminent.
"Tell me, how I may know him, how adore,
"From whom I have, that thus I move and live,
"And feel that I am happier than I know."

Paradise Lost, viii. 273.

be interested in any thing else whatsoever. If I were to believe, with some authors, that my mind is perpetually changing, so as to become every different moment a different thing, the remembrance of past, or the anticipation of future good or evil, could give me neither pleasure nor pain; yea, though I were to believe, that a cruel death would overtake me within an hour, I should be no more concerned, than if I were told, that a certain elephant, three thousand years hence, would be sacrificed on the top of mount Atlas. To a man who doubts the individuality or identity

Of the reality of his own life, motion, and existence, it is observable that he makes no question; and indeed it would have been strange if he had. But Dryden, in his opera called *The state of innocence,* would needs attempt an improvement on this passage; and to make surer work, obliges Adam to prove his existence by argument before he allows him to enter upon any other inquiry:

" What am I? or from whence? For that I am
" I know, *because I think;* but whence I came,
" Or how this frame of mine began to be,
" What other being can disclose to me?"

Act 2. scene 1.

Dryden, it seems, had read Des Cartes; but Milton had studied nature: Accordingly Dryden speaks like a metaphysician, Milton like a poet and philosopher

of his own mind, virtue, truth, religion, good and evil, hope and fear, are absolutely nothing.

Metaphysicians have taken some pains to confound our notions on the subject of identity; and, by establishing the currency of certain ambiguous phrases, have succeeded so well that it is now hardly possible for us to explain these dictates of our nature, according to common sense and common experience, in such language as shall be liable to no exception. The misfortune is, that many of the words we must use, though extremely well understood, are either too simple or too complex in their meaning, to admit a logical definition; so that the caviller is never at a loss for an evasive reply to any thing we may advance. But I will take it upon me to affirm, that there are hardly any human notions more clearly, or more universally understood, than those we entertain concerning the identity both of ourselves and of other things, however difficult we may sometimes find it to express those notions in proper words. And I will also venture to affirm, that the sentiments of the generality of mankind on this head are grounded on such evidence, that he who refuses to be convinced by it, acts irrationally, and cannot, consistently with such refusal, believe any thing.

1. The existence of our own mind, as something different and distinct from the body, is

universally acknowledged. I say universally; having never heard of any nation of men upon earth, who did not, in their conversation and behaviour, show, by the plainest signs, that they made this distinction. Nay, so strongly are mankind impressed with it, that the rudest barbarians, by their incantations, their funeral solemnities, their traditions concerning invisible beings, and their hopes of a future state, seem to declare, that to the existence of the soul the body is not, in their opinion, necessary. All philosophers, a few Epicureans and Pyrrhonists excepted, have acknowledged the existence of the soul, as one of the first and most unexceptionable principles of human science. Now whence could a notion so universal arise? Let us examine our own minds, and we shall find, that it could arise from nothing but consciousness, a certain irresistible persuasion, that we have a soul distinct from the body. The evidence of this notion is intuitive; it is the evidence of internal sense. Reasoning can neither prove nor disprove it. DES CARTES, and his disciple MALEBRANCHE, acknowledge, that the existence of the human soul must be believed by all men, even by those who can bring themselves to doubt of every thing else.

Mr. Simon Browne,* a learned and pious

* See his affecting story in the Adventurer, vol. 3. No. 88.

clergyman of the last age, is perhaps the only person on record of whom there is reason to think, that he seriously disbelieved the existence of his own soul. He imagined, that in consequence of an extraordinary interposition of divine power, his rational soul was gradually annihilated, and that nothing was now left him, but a principle of animal life, which he held in common with the brutes. But wherever the story of this excellent person is known, his unhappy mistake will be imputed to madness, and to a depravation of intellect, as real, and as extraordinary, as if he had disbelieved the existence of his body, or the axioms of mathematicks.

2. That the thinking principle, which we believe to be within us, continues the same through life, is equally self-evident, and equally agreeable to the universal consent of mankind. If a man were to speak and act in the evening, as if he believed himself to have become a different person since the morning, the whole world would pronounce him mad. Were we to attempt to disbelieve our own identity, we should labour in vain; we could as easily bring ourselves to believe, that it is possible for the same thing to be and not to be But there is no reason to think, that this attempt was ever made by any man, not even by Mr. Hume himself; though that author,

in his treatise of human nature, has asserted, yea, and proved too, (according to his notions of proof), that the human soul is perpetually changing; being nothing but "a bundle of perceptions, "that succeed each other with inconceivable ra- "pidity, and are (as he chooses to express it) in "a perpetual flux." * He might as easily, in my opinion, and as decisively, with equal credit to his own understanding, and with equal advantage to the reader, by a method of reasoning no less philosophical, and with the same degree of discretion in the use of words, have attacked the axioms of mathematicks, or any other truths instructive or demonstrable, and produced a formal and serious confutation of them. In explaining the evidence on which we believe our own identity. it is not necessary that I should here examine his arguments against that belief: first, because the point in question is self-evident; and therefore all reasoning on the other side unphilosophical and irrational: and, secondly, because I shall afterwards prove, that some of Mr. HUME's first principles are inconceivable; and that this very notion of his, concerning identity, when fairly stated, is palpably absurd.

It has been asked, how we can pretend to have

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 428. &c

full evidence of our identity, when of identity itself we are so far from having a distinct notion, that we cannot define it. It might, with as good reason be asked, how we come to believe that two and two are equal to four, or, that a circle is different from a triangle, if we cannot define either equality or diversity: why we believe in our own existence, since we cannot define existence: why, in a word, the vulgar believe any thing at all, since they know nothing about the rules of definition, and hardly ever attempt it. In fact, we have numberless ideas that admit not of definition, and yet concerning which we may argue, and believe, and know, with the utmost clearness and certainty. To define heat or cold, identity or diversity, red or white, an ox or an ass, would puzzle all the logicians on earth; yet nothing can be clearer, or more certain, than many of our judgments concerning those objects. The rudest of the vulgar know most perfectly what they mean, when they say, Three months ago I was at such a town, and have ever since been at home: and the conviction they have of the truth of this proposition is founded on the best of evidence, namely, on that of internal sense; in which all men, by the law of their nature, do and must implicitly believe.

It has been asked, whether this continued con-

sciousness of our being always the same, does not constitute our sameness or identity. No more, I should answer, than our perception of truth, light or cold, is the efficient cause of truth, light, or cold. Our identity is perceived by consciousness; but consciousness is as different from identity, as the understanding is different from truth, as past events are different from memory, as colours from the power of seeing. Consciousness of identity is so far from constituting identity, that it presupposes it. An animal might continue the same being, and yet not be conscious of its identity; which is probably the case with many of the brute creation; nay, which is often the case with man himself. When we sleep without dreaming, or fall into a fainting fit,* or rave in a

* The following case, which M. Crozaz gave in to the Academy of Sciences, is the most extraordinary instance of interrupted consciousness I have ever heard of. A nobleman of Lausanne, as he was giving orders to a servant, suddenly lost his speech and all his senses. Different remedies were tried without effect for six months; during all which time he appeared to be in a deep sleep, or deliquium, with various symptoms at different periods, which are particularly specified in the narration. At last, after some chirurgical operations, at the end of six months his speech and senses were suddenly restored. When he recovered, the servant to whom he had been giving orders when he was first

fever, and often too in our ordinary dreams, we lose all sense of our identity, and yet never conceive that our identity has suffered any interruption or change: the moment we awake or recover, we are conscious that we are the same individual beings we were before.

Many doubts and difficulties have been started about our manner of conceiving identity of person under a change of substance. Plutarch tells us, that in the time of Demetrius Phalereus, the Athenians still preserved the custom of sending every year to Delos the same galley which, about

seized with the distemper, happening to be in the room, he asked whether he had executed his commission; not being sensible, it seems, that any interval of time, except, perhaps a very short one, had elapsed during his illness. He lived ten years after, and died of another disease. See *L'Histoire de l' Academie Royale des Sciences, pour l'année* 1719, *p* 28. Van Swieten also relates this story in his Commentaries on Boerhaave's Aphorisms, under the head *Apoplexy*. I mention it chiefly with a view to the reader's amusement: he may consider the evidence, and believe or disbelieve as he pleases. But that consciousness may be interrupted by a total deliquium, without any change in our notions of our own identity, I know by my own experience. I am therefore fully persuaded, that the identity of this substance which I call my soul, may continue even when I am unconscious of it: and if for a shorter space, why not for a longer?

a thousand years before, had brought Theseus and his company from Crete; and that it then used to be a question in the schools, how this could be the same vessel, when every part of its materials had been changed oftener than once.* It is asked, how a tree can be accounted the same, when from a plant of an inch long, it has grown to the height of fifty feet; and how identity can be ascribed to the human body, since its parts are continually changing, so that not one particle of the body I now have, belonged to the body I had twenty years ago.

It were well if metaphysicians would think more and speak less on these subjects: they would then find, that the difficulties so much complained of are rather verbal than real. Was there a single Athenian, who did not know in what respects the galley of Theseus continued the same, and in what respects it was changed? It was the same in respect of its name, its destination, its shape perhaps, and size, and some other particulars; in respect of substance it was altogether different. And when one party in the schools maintained, that it was the same, and the other, that it was not the same, all the difference between them was this, that the one used the word *same* in one sense, and the other in another.

* Plutarch, in Theseo. Plato, in Phædone.

The identity of vegetables is as easily conceived. No man imagines, that the plant of an inch long is the same in substance with the tree of fifty feet. The latter is by the vulgar supposed to retain all the substance of the former, but with the addition of an immense quantity of adventitious matter. Thus far, and no further, do they suppose the substance of the tree to continue the same. They call it however, the same tree: and the same it is, in many respects, which to every person of common understanding, are obvious enough, though not easily expressed in unexceptionable language.

Of the changes made in the human body by attrition, the vulgar have no notion. They believe the substance of a full grown body to continue the same, notwithstanding its being sometimes fatter, and sometimes leaner; even as they suppose the substance of a wall to be the same before and after it is plastered, or painted. They therefore do not ascribe to it identity of person, and diversity of substance, but a real and proper identity both of substance and person. Of the identity of the body while increasing in stature, they conceive, nearly in the same way, as of the identity of vegetables: they know in what respect it continues the same, and in what respect it becomes different; there is no confusion in their notions;

they never suppose it to be different in those respects in which they know it to be the same.

When philosophers speak of the identity of the human body, they must mean, not that its substance is the same, for this they say is perpetually changing; but that it is the same, in respect of its having been all along animated with the same vital and thinking principle, distinguished by the same name, marked with the same or similar features, placed in the same relations of life, &c. It must be obvious to the intelligent reader, that the difficulties attending this subject arise not from any ambiguity or intricacy in our notions or judgments, for these are extremely clear, but from our way of expressing them: the particulars in which an object continues the same, are often so blended with those in which it has become different, that we cannot find proper words for marking the distinction, and therefore must have recourse to obscure circumlocutions.

But whatever judgments we form of the identity of corporeal objects, we cannot from them draw any inference concerning the identity of our mind. We cannot ascribe extension or solidity to the soul, far less any increase or diminution of solid or extended parts. Here, therefore, there is no ground for distinguishing diversity of substance from identity of person. Our soul is the very

same being now it was yesterday, last year, twenty years ago. This is a dictate of common sense, and intuitive truth, which all mankind, by the law of their nature, do and must believe, and the contrary of which is inconceivable. We have perhaps changed many of our principles; we may have acquired many new ideas and notions, and lost many of those we once had; but that the substance, essence or personality, of the soul, has suffered any change, increase or diminution, we never have supposed, nor can suppose. New faculties have perhaps appeared, with which we were formerly unacquainted; but these we cannot conceive to have affected the identity of the soul, any more than learning to write, or to play on a musical instrument, is conceived to affect the identity of the hand; or than the perception of harmony the first time one hears musick, is conceived to affect the identity of the ear.*

* I beg leave to quote a few lines from an excellent poem, written by an author whose genius and virtue were an honour to his country, and to human nature;

" Am I but what I seem, mere flesh and blood,
" A branching channel, and a mazy flood?
" The purple stream, that through my vessels glides,
" Dull and unconscious flows like common tides.
" The pipes, through which the circling juices stray,
" Are not that thinking I, no more than they.

But if we perceive our identity by consciousness, and if the acts of consciousness by which we perceive it be interrupted, how can we know that our identity is not interrupted? I answer, the law of our nature determines us, whether we will or not, to believe that we continue the same thinking beings. The interruption of consciousness, whether more or less frequent, makes no change in this belief. My perception of the visible creation is every moment interrupted by the winking of my eyes. Am I therefore to believe, that the visible universe, which I this moment perceive, is not the same with the visible universe I perceived last moment? Then must I also believe, that the existence of the universe depends on the motion of my eyelids; and that the muscles which move them have the power of creating and annihilating worlds.

To conclude: That our soul exists, and contin-

"This frame compacted with transcendent skill,
"Of moving joints obedient to my will,
"Nurs'd from the fruitful glebe like yonder tree,
"Waxes and wastes: I call it MINE not ME.
"New matter still the mouldering mass sustains;
"The mansion changed, the tenant still remains.
"And, from the fleeting stream repair'd by food,
"Distinct, as is the swimmer from the flood."

ARBUTHNOT.

See *Dodsley's Collection, vol.* 1. *p.* 180.

ues through life the same individual being, is a dictate of common sense; a truth which the law of our nature renders it impossible for us to disbelieve; and in regard to which, we cannot suppose ourselves in an errour, without supposing our faculties fallacious, and consequently disclaiming all conviction, and all certainty, and disavowing the distinction between truth and falsehood.

SECTION IV.

Of the Evidence of Memory.

The evidence of memory commands our belief as effectually as that of sense. With regard to any of my transactions of yesterday which I now remember, I cannot doubt whether I performed them or not. That I dined to-day, and was in bed last night, is as certain to me, as that I at present see the colour of this paper. If we had no memory, knowledge and experience would be impossible; and if we had any tendency to distrust our memory, knowledge and experience would be of as little use in directing our conduct and sentiments, as our dreams now are. Sometimes we doubt, whether in a particular case we exert

memory or imagination, and our belief is suspended accordingly: but no sooner do we become conscious, that we *remember*, than conviction instantly takes place; we say, I am certain it was so, for now I remember I was an eyewitness.

But who is it that teaches the child to believe, that yesterday he was punished, because he remembers to have been punished yesterday? Or, by what argument will you convince him, that, notwithstanding his remembrance, he ought not to believe that he was punished yesterday, because his memory is fallacious? The matter depends not upon education or reasoning. We trust to the evidence of memory, because we cannot help trusting to it. The same providence that indued us with memory, without any care of ours, indued us also with an instinctive propensity to believe in it, previously to all reasoning and experience. Nay, all reasoning supposes the testimony of memory to be authentick: for, without trusting implicitly to this testimony, no train of reasoning could be prosecuted; we could never be convinced, that the conclusion is fair, if we did not *remember* the several steps of the argument, and if we were not certain that this remembrance is not fallacious.

The varieties of memory in different men are very remarkable; and in the same man the

remembrance of some things is more lasting, and more lively, than that of others. Some of the ideas of memory seem to decay gradually by length of time; so that there may be some things which I distinctly remembered seven years ago, but which at present I remember very imperfectly, and which in seven years more (if I live so long) I shall have utterly forgotten. Hence some have been led to think, that the evidence of memory decays gradually, from absolute certainty, through all the degrees of probability, down to that suspense of judgment which we call *doubt*. They seem to have imagined, that the vivacity of the idea is in some sort necessary to the establishment of belief. Nay, one author* has gone so far as to say, that belief is nothing else but this vivacity of ideas; as if we never believed what we have no lively conception of, nor doubted of any thing of which we have a lively conception. But this doctrine is so absurd, that it hardly deserves confutation. I have a more lively idea of Don Quixote than of the present king of Prussia; and yet I believe that the latter does exist, and that the former never did. When I was a schoolboy, I read an abridgment of the history of Robinson Crusoe, and believed every word of it:

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 172

since I grew up, I have read that ingenious work at large, and consequently have a much livelier conception of it than before: yet I now believe the whole to be a fiction. Some months ago I read the *Treatise of Human Nature*, and have at present a pretty clear remembrance of its contents; but I shall probably forget the greater part in a short time. When that happens, I ought not, according to this theory, to believe that I ever read it. As long, however, as my faculties remain unimpaired, I fear I shall hardly be able to bring myself to this pitch of scepticism. No, no; I shall ever have good reason to remember my having read that book; however imperfect my remembrance may be, and however little ground I may have to congratulate myself upon my acquaintance with it.

The vivacity of a perception does not seem necessary to our belief of the existence of the thing perceived. I see a town afar off; its visible magnitude is not more than an inch square, and therefore my perception of it is neither lively nor distinct; and yet I as certainly believe that town to exist, as if I were in the centre of it. I see an object in motion on the top of yonder hill; I cannot discern whether it be a man or a horse, or both; I therefore exert no belief in regard to the class or species of things

to which it belongs: but I believe with as much assurance that it exists, as if I saw it distinctly in all its parts and dimensions. We have never any doubt of the existence of an object so long as we are sure that we perceive it by our senses, whether the perception be strong or weak, distinct or confused; but whenever we begin to doubt, whether the object be perceived by our senses, or whether we only imagine that we perceive it, then we likewise begin to doubt of its existence.

These observations are applicable to memory. I saw a certain object some years ago; my remembrance of it is less distinct now than it was the day after I saw it; but I believe the evidence of my memory as much at present as I did then, in regard to all the parts of it which I now am conscious that I remember. Let a past event be ever so remote in time, if I am conscious that I remember it, I still believe, with equal assurance, that this event did once take place. For what is memory, but a consciousness of our having formerly done or perceived something? And if it be true, that something is perceived or done at this present moment, it will always be true that at this moment that thing was perceived or done. The evidence of memory does not decay in proportion as the ideas of memory become less lively; as long as we are conscious that we *re-*

member, so long will the evidence attending that remembrance produce absolute certainty; and absolute certainty admits not of degrees. Indeed, as was already observed, when remembrance becomes so obscure, that we are at a loss to determine whether we *remember* or only *imagine* an event,—in this case belief will be suspended till we become certain whether we remember or not; whenever we become certain that we do remember, conviction instantly arises.

Some have supposed that the evidence of memory is liable to become uncertain, because we are not well enough acquainted with the difference between memory and imagination, to be able at all times to determine, whether the one or the other be exerted in regard to the events or facts we may have occasion to contemplate. "You say, that while you only imagine an event, "you neither believe nor disbelieve the existence "or reality of it: but as soon as you become con- "scious that you remember it, you instantly be- "lieve it to have been real. You must then know "with certainty the difference between memory "and imagination, and be able to tell by what "marks you distinguish the operations of the "former from those of the latter. If you cannot "do this, you may mistake the one for the other, "and think that you *imagine* when you really *re-*

"*member*, and that you *remember* when you only "*imagine*. That belief, therefore, must be very "precarious, which is built upon the evidence of "memory, since this evidence is so apt to be con- "founded with the visionary exhibitions of ima- "gination, which, by your own acknowledgment, "can never constitute a foundation for true ra- "tional belief."* This is an objection according to the metaphysical mode; which, without consulting experience, is satisfied if a few plausible words can be put together in the form of an argument: but this objection will have no credit with those who acknowledge ultimate instinctive principles of conviction, and who have more faith in their own feelings than in the subtleties of logick.

It is certain the vulgar are not able to give a satisfactory account of the difference between memory and imagination; even philosophers have not always succeeded in their attempts to illustrate this point.† Mr. Hume tells us, that

* I do not remember where I have met with this argument. Perhaps I may have heard it in conversation.

† Addison, in the Spectator, No. 411. seems to consider imagination as a faculty conversant among those ideas only which are derived from the sense of seeing. But is not this acceptation of the word too limited? I can invent, and consequently imagine, a tune which I

ideas of memory are distinguished from those of imagination by the superiour vivacity of the former.* This may sometimes, but cannot always be true: for ideas of imagination are often mistaken for objects of sense; ideas of memory never. The former, therefore, must often be more lively than the latter; for, according to this author's own account, all ideas are weaker than

never heard. When I look at Hogarth's humourous print of *The Enraged Musician*, I can imagine the several discordant sounds supposed to proceed from the persons and instruments there assembled. Men born blind, or who have lost all remembrance of light and colours, are as capable of invention, and dream as frequently, as those who see; my learned, ingenious, and worthy friend Dr. Blacklock of Edinburgh, who lost his sight at five months old, is an example of both.—Some authors have defined imagination, the simple apprehension of corporeal objects when absent. But cannot a good man imagine the remorse of a murderer, or the anxieties of a miser? Cannot one invent new theories in the abstract philosophy, or even an entire new system of it?—Imagination, in the modern philosophick language, seems to denote two things: 1. That power of the mind which contemplates *ideas* (that is, *thoughts* or *notions*) without referring them to real existence, or to our past experience; 2. That power which combines ideas into new forms or assemblages.

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 153

impressions, or informations of sense.* Dreaming persons, lunaticks, stageplayers, enthusiasts, and all who are agitated by fear, or other violent passions, are apt to mistake ideas of imagination for real things, and the perception of those ideas for real sensation. And the same thing is often experienced by persons of strong fancy, and great sensibility of temper, at a time when they are not troubled with any fits of irrationality or violent passion.

But whatever difficulty we may find in defining or describing memory, so as to distinguish it from imagination, we are never at any loss about our own meaning, when we speak of remembering and of imagining. We all know what it is to remember, and what it is to imagine: a retrospect to former experience always attends the exertions of memory; but those of imagination are not attended with any such retrospect. "I re- "member to have seen a lion, and I can imagine "an elephant or centaur, which I have never "seen:"—Every body who uses these words knows very well what they mean, whether he be able to explain his meaning by other words or not. The truth is, that when we remember, we generally know that we remember; when we im-

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. I. p. 41.

agine, we generally know that we imagine:* such is our constitution. We therefore do not suppose the evidence of memory uncertain, notwithstanding that we may be at a loss to explain the difference between that faculty and imagination: this difference is perfectly known to every man by experience, though perhaps no man can fully express it in words. There are many things very familiar to us, which we have no words to express. I cannot describe or define, either a red colour, which I know to be a simple object, or a white colour, which I know to be a composition of seven colours: but will any one hence infer, that I am ignorant of their difference, so as not to know, when I look on ermine, whether it be white or red? Let it not then be said, that because we cannot define memory and imagination, therefore we are ignorant of their difference: every person of a sound mind knows their difference, and can with certainty determine, when it is that he exerts the one, and when it is that he exerts the other.

* In dreams indeed this is not the case; but the delusions of dreaming, for all our frequent experience of them, are never supposed to affect in the least degree either the veracity of our faculties, or the certainty of our knowledge. See below, Part ii. chap. 2. sect. 2.

SECTION V.

Of Reasoning from the Effect to the Cause.

I LEFT my chamber an hour ago, and now at my return find a book on the table, the size, and binding, and contents of which are so remarkable, that I am certain it was not here when I went out; and that I never saw it before. I ask, who brought this book; and am told, that nobody has entered my apartment since I left it. That, say I, is *impossible*. I make a more particular inquiry; and a servant, in whose veracity I can confide, assures me, that he has had his eye on my chamber door the whole day, and that no person has entered it but myself only. Then, say I, the person who brought this book must have come in by the window or the chimney; for it is *impossible* that this book could have come hither of itself. The servant bids me remember, that my chimney is too narrow to admit any human creature, and that the window is secured on the inside in such a manner that it cannot be opened from without. I examine the walls; it is evident no breach has been made; and there is but one door to the apartment. What shall I think? If the servant's report be true, and if the book have not been brought by any visible agent, it must

have come in a miraculous manner, by the interposition of some invisible cause; for still I must repeat, that without some cause it *could not possibly* have come hither.

Let the reader consider the case, and deliberate with himself, whether I think irrationally on this occasion, or express myself too strongly, when I speak of the *impossibility* of a book appearing in my chamber without some cause of its appearance, either visible or invisible. I would not willingly refer such a phenomenon to a miracle; but still a miracle is possible; whereas it is absolutely impossible that this could have happened without a cause; at least it seems to me to be as real an impossibility, as that a part should be greater than the whole, or that things equal to one and the same thing should be unequal to one another. And I presume the reader will be of my opinion; for in all my intercourse with others, and after a careful examination of my own mind, I have never found any reason to think, that it is possible for a human, or for a rational creature, to conceive a thing beginning to exist, and proceeding from no cause.

I pronounce it therefore to be an axiom, clear, certain, and undeniable, that "whatever begin-"neth to exist, proceedeth from some cause." I cannot bring myself to think, that the reverse

of any geometrical axiom is more incredible than the reverse of this; and therefore I am as certain of the truth of this, as I can be of the truth of the other, and cannot, without contradicting myself, and doing violence to my nature, even attempt to believe otherwise.

Whether this maxim be intuitive or demonstrable, may perhaps admit of some dispute; but the determination of that point will not in the least affect the truth of the maxim. If it be demonstrable, we can then assign a reason for our belief of it: if it be intuitive, it is on the same footing with other intuitive axioms; that is, we believe it, because the law of our nature renders it impossible for us to disbelieve it.

In proof of this maxim it has been said, that nothing can produce itself. But this truth is not more evident than the truth to be proved, and therefore is no proof at all. Nay, this last proposition seems to be only a different, and less proper, way of expressing the same thing: nothing can produce itself; that is, every thing produced must be produced by some other thing; that is, every effect must proceed from a cause; and that is, (for all effects being posteriour to their causes, must necessarily have a beginning) "every thing beginning to exist proceeds from "some cause." Other arguments have been offered in proof of this maxim, which I think are

sufficiently confuted by Mr. HUME, in his treatise of human nature.* This maxim therefore he affirms, and I allow, to be not demonstrably certain; but he further affirms, that it is not intuitively certain, in which I cannot agree with him. "All certainty," says he, "arises from the comparison of ideas, and from the discovery of such "relations as are unalterable so long as the ideas "continue the same; but the only relations† of "this kind are resemblance, proportion in quantity and number, degrees of any quality and "contrariety; none of which is implied in the "maxim, *Whatever begins to exist, proceeds from "some cause:* that maxim therefore is not intuitively certain." This argument, if it prove any thing at all, would prove, that the maxim is not even certain; for we are here told, that it has not that character or quality from which all certainty arises.

But, if I mistake not, both the premises of this

* Book 1. part 3. sect. 3.

† There are, according to Mr. HUME, seven different kinds of philosophical relation, to wit, resemblance, identity, relations of time and place, proportion in quantity or number, degrees in any common quality, contrariety, and causation. And by the word *relation* he here means, that particular circumstance in which we may think proper to compare ideas. See *Treatise of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 32. 142.

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syllogism are false. In the first place, I cannot admit, that all certainty arises from a comparison of ideas. I am certain of the existence of myself and of the other things that affect my senses; I am certain, that "what ever is, is;" and yet I cannot conceive, that any comparison of ideas is necessary to produce these convictions in my mind. Perhaps I cannot speak of them without using words expressive of relation; but the simple act or perception of the understanding by which I am conscious of them, implies not any comparison that I can discover. If it did, then the simplest intuitive truth requires proof, or illustration at least, before it can be acknowledged as truth by the mind; which I presume will not be found warranted by experience. Whether others are conscious of making such a comparison, before they yield assent to the simplest intuitive truth, I know not; but this I know, that my mind is often conscious of certainty where no such comparison has been made by me. I acknowledge, indeed, that no certain truth can become an object of science, till it be expressed in words; that, if expressed in words, it must assume the form of a proposition; and that every proposition, being either affirmative or negative, must imply a comparison of the thing or subject, with that quality or circumstance which is af-

firmed or denied to belong to or agree with it: and therefore I acknowledge, that in science all certainty may be said to arise from a comparison of ideas. But the generality of mankind believe many things as certain, which they never thought of expressing in words. An ordinary man believes, that himself, his family, his house, and cattle, exist; but, in order to produce this belief in his mind, is it necessary, that he compare those objects with the general idea of existence or nonexistence, so as to discern their agreement with the one, or disagreement with the other? I cannot think it: at least, if he has ever made such a comparison, it must have been without his knowledge: for I am convinced, that, if we were to ask him the question, he would not understand us.

Secondly, I apprehend, that our author has not enumerated all the relations which, when discovered, give rise to certainty. I am certain that I am the same person to-day I was yesterday. This indeed our author denies.* I cannot help it; I am certain notwithstanding; and I flatter myself, there are not many persons in the world who would think this sentiment of mine a paradox. I say, then, I am certain, that

* See part ii. chap. 2. sect. 1. of this essay.

I am the same person to-day I was yesterday. Now, the relation expressed in this proposition is not resemblance, nor proportion in quantity, and number, nor degrees of any common quality nor contrariety; it is a relation different from all these; it is identity or sameness. That London is contiguous to the Thames, is a proposition which many of the most sensible people in Europe hold to be certainly true; and yet the relation expressed in it is none of those four which our author supposes to be the sole properties of certainty. For it is not in respect of resemblance, of proportion in quantity or number, of contrariety, or of degrees in any common quality, that London and the Thames are here compared, but purely in respect of place or situation.

Again, that the foregoing maxim is neither intuitively nor demonstrably certain, our author attempts to prove from this consideration, that we cannot demonstrate the impossibility of the contrary. Nay, the contrary, he says, is not inconceivable: "for we can conceive an object non-"existent this moment, and existent the next, "without joining it to the idea of a cause, which "is an idea altogether distinct and different." But this, I presume, is not a fair state of the case. Can we conceive a thing beginning to exist, and yet bring ourselves to think that a

cause is not necessary to the production of such a thing? If we cannot, (I am sure I cannot) then is the contrary of this maxim, when fairly stated, found to be truly and properly inconceivable.

But whether the contrary of this maxim be inconceivable or not, the maxim itself may be intuitively certain. Of intuitive, as well as of demonstrable truths, there are different kinds. It is a character of some, that their contraries are inconceivable: such are the axioms of geometry. But of many other intuitive truths, the contraries are conceivable. "I do feel a hard body;" "I do not feel a hard body;" these propositions are equally conceivable: the first is true, for I have a pen between my fingers; but I cannot prove its truth by argument; therefore its truth is perceived intuitively.

Thus far we have argued for the sake of argument, and opposed metaphysick to metaphysick,* in order to prove, that our author's reasoning on the present subject is not conclusive. It is now time to enter into the merits of the cause, and consider the matter philosophically, that is, according to fact and experience. And in this way we bring it to a very short issue. The point in dispute is, whether this maxim, "whatever

* See part iii. chap. 2. of this essay.

"begins to exist, proceeds from some cause," be intuitively certain. That the mind naturally and necessarily assents to it without any doubt, and considers its contrary as impossible, I have already shown; the maxim, therefore, is certainly true. That it cannot, by any argument or medium of proof, be rendered more evident than it is when first apprehended by the mind, is also certain; for it is of itself as evident as any proposition that can be urged in proof of it. If, therefore, this maxim be true, (as every rational being feels, and acknowledges) it is a principle of common sense: we believe it, not because we can give a reason, but because, by the law of our nature, we must believe it.

Our opinion of the necessity of a cause to the production of every thing that has a beginning, is by our author supposed to arise from observation and experience. It is true, that in our experience we have never found any thing beginning to exist, and proceeding from no cause; but I imagine it will not appear, that our belief of this axiom hath experience for its foundation. For let it be remarked, that some children, at a time when their experience is very scanty, seem to be as sensible of the truth of this axiom, as many persons arrived at maturity. I do not mean, that they ever repeat it in the form of a proposi-

tion; or that, if they were to hear it repeated in that form, they would instantly declare their assent to it; for a proposition can never be rationally assented to, except by those who understand the words that compose it: but I mean, that these children have a natural propensity to inquire after the cause of any effect or event that engages their attention; which they would not do, if the view of an event or effect did not suggest to them, that a cause is necessary to its production. Their curiosity in asking the reasons and causes of every thing they see and hear, is often very remarkable, and rises even to impertinence; at least it is called so when one is not prepared to give them an answer. I have known a child break open his drum, to see if he could discover the cause of its extraordinary sound: and that at the hazard of rendering the plaything unserviceable, and of being punished for his indiscretion. If the ardour of this curiosity were always proportioned to the extent of a child's experience, or to the care his teachers have taken to make him attentive to the dependence of effects on causes, we might then ascribe it to the power of education, or to a habit contracted by experience But every one who has had an opportunity of conversing with children, knows that this is not the case; and that their curiosity

cannot otherwise be accounted for, than by supposing it instinctive, and, like other instincts, stronger in some minds, and weaker in others, independently on experience and education, and in consequence of the appointment of that Being who has been pleased to make one man differ from another in his intellectual accomplishments, as well as in his features, complexion, and size. Nor let it be imagined, because some children are in this respect more curious than others, that therefore the belief of this maxim is instinctive in some minds only: the maxim may be equally believed by all, notwithstanding this diversity. For do we not find a similar diversity in the genius of different *men?* Some men have a philosophical turn of mind, and love to investigate causes, and to have a reason ready on every occasion; others are indifferent as to these matters, being engrossed by studies of another kind. And yet I presume it will be found, that the truth of this maxim is felt by every man, though perhaps many men never thought of putting it in words in the form of a proposition.

We repeat therefore that this axiom is one of the principles of common sense, which every rational mind does and must acknowledge to be true; not because it can be proved, but because the law of nature determines us to believe it

without proof, and to look upon its contrary as absurd and impossible.

The axiom now before us is the foundation of the most important argument that ever employed human reason; I mean that which, from the works that are created, evinces the eternal power and godhead of the Creator. That argument, as far as it resolves itself into this axiom, is properly a demonstration, being a clear deduction from a self-evident principle; and therefore no man can pretend to understand it without feeling it to be conclusive. So that what the psalmist says of the atheist is literally true, *He is a fool;* as really irrational as if he refused to be convinced by a mathematical demonstration. Nay, he is more irrational; because there is no truth demonstrated in mathematicks which so many powers of our nature conspire to ratify, and with which all rational minds are so deeply impressed. The contemplation of the divine nature is the most useful and the most ennobling exercise in which our faculties can be engaged; and recommends itself to every man of sound judgment and good taste, as the most durable and most perfect enjoyment that can fall to the share of any created being. Scepticks may wrangle, and mockers may blaspheme; but the pious man knows by evidence

too sublime for their comprehension,* that his affections are not misplaced, and that his hopes shall not be disappointed; by evidence which, to the humble and tenderhearted, is altogether overwhelming, irresistible, and divine.

That many of the objects in nature have had a beginning, is obvious to our own senses and memory, or confirmed by unquestionable testimony: these, therefore, according to the axiom we are here considering, must be believed to have proceeded from a cause adequate at least to the effects produced. That the whole sensible universe hath to us the appearance of an effect, of something which once was not, and which exists not by any necessity of nature, but by the appointment of some powerful and intelligent cause different from and independent on it; that the universe I say, has this appearance, cannot be denied: and that it is what it appears to be, an effect; that it had a beginning, and was not from eternity, is proved by every sort of evidence the subject will admit. And if so, we offer violence

* My meaning is only this, that the faith of pious men will be strengthened by such supernatural aid as unbelievers or blasphemers can have no reason to expect; a doctrine which, if I mistake not, is warranted by the scripture; John vii. 17.

to our understanding, when we attempt to believe that the whole universe does not proceed from some cause; and we argue unphilosophically, when we endeavour to disprove this natural and universal suggestion of the human mind.

It is true, the universe is, as one may say, a work *sui generis*, altogether singular, and such as we cannot properly compare to other works; because indeed all works are comprehended in it. But that natural dictate of the mind, by which we believe the universe to have proceeded from a cause, arises from our considering it as an effect; a circumstance in which it is perfectly similar to all works whatsoever. The singularity of the effect rather confirms (if that be possible) than weakens our belief of the necessity of a cause; at least it makes us more attentive to the cause, and interests us more deeply in it. What is the universe, but a vast system of works or effects, some of them great, and others small; some more, and some less considerable? If each of these works, the least as well as the greatest, require a cause for its production; is it not in the highest degree absurd to say, that the whole is not the effect of a cause? Each link of a great chain must be supported by something, but the whole chain may be supported by nothing. Nothing less than an ounce can be a counterpoise

to an ounce, nothing less than a pound to a pound; but the wing of a gnat, or nothing at all, may be a sufficient counterpoise to ten hundred thousand pounds. Are not these assertions too absurd to deserve an answer?

The reader, if he be acquainted with Mr. HUME's *essay on a particular providence and a future state*, will see, that these remarks are intended as an answer to a very strange argument there advanced against the belief of a Deity. "The universe," we are told, "is an object "quite singular and unparalleled; no other ob- "ject that has fallen under our observation bears "any similarity to it; neither it nor its cause can "be comprehended under any known species; "and therefore concerning the cause of the uni- "verse we can form no rational conclusion at "all." I appeal to any man of sound judgment, whether that suggestion of his understanding, which prompts him to infer a cause from an effect, has any dependence upon a prior operation of his mind, by which the effect in question is referred to its genus or species. When he pronounces concerning any object, which he conceives to have had a beginning, that it must have proceeded from some cause, does this judgment necessarily imply any comparison of that object with others of a like kind? If the new ob-

ject were in every respect unlike to other objects, would this have any influence on his judgment? Would he not acknowledge a cause to be as necessary for the production of the most uncommon, as of the most familiar object? If therefore I believe, that I myself owe my existence to some cause, because there is something in my mind which necessarily determines me to this belief, I must also, for the very same reason, believe, that the whole universe (supposed to have had a beginning) proceeds from some cause. The evidence of both is the same. If I believe the first and not the second, I believe and disbelieve the same evidence at the same time; I believe that the very same suggestion of my understanding is both true and false.

Though I were to grant, that, when an object is reducible to no known genus, no rational inference can be made concerning its cause; yet it will not follow, that our inferences concerning the cause of the universe are irrational, supposing it reasonable to believe that the universe had a beginning. If there be in the universe any thing which is reducible to no known genus, let it be mentioned: if there be any presumption for the existence of such a thing, let the foundation of that presumption be explained. And, if you please, I shall, for argument's sake, admit that

concerning the cause of that particular thing, no rational conclusion can be formed. But it has never been asserted, that the existence of such a thing is either real or probable. Mr. Hume only asserts, that the universe itself, not any particular thing in the universe, is reducible to no known genus. Well, then, let me ask, what is the universe? A word? No; it is a vast collection of things. Are all these things reducible to genera? Mr. Hume does not deny it. Each of these things, then, if it had a beginning, must also have had a cause? It must. What thing in the universe exists uncaused? Nothing. Is this a rational conclusion? So it seems. It seems, then, that though it be rational to assign a cause to every thing in the universe, yet to assign a cause to the universe is not rational! It is shameful thus to trifle with words. In fact, this argument, so highly admired by its author, is no argument at all. It is founded on a distinction that is perfectly inconceivable. Twenty shillings make a pound: though you lay twenty shillings on the table, you have not laid down a pound, you have only laid down twenty shillings. If the reader cannot enter into this distinction, he will never be able to conceive in what the force of Mr. Hume's argument consists.

If the universe had a beginning, it must have

had a cause. This is a self-evident axiom, or at least an undeniable consequence of one. We necessarily assent to it; such is the law of our nature. If we deny it, we cannot, without absurdity, believe any thing else; because we at the same time deny the authenticity of those instinctive suggestions which are the foundations of all truth. The atheist will never be able to elude the force of this argument, till he can prove, that every thing in nature exists necessarily, independently, and from eternity.

If Mr. Hume's argument be found to turn to so little account, from the simple consideration of the universe, as existing, and as having had a beginning, it will appear (if possible) still more irrational, when we take a view of the universe, and its parts, as of works curiously adapted to certain ends. Their existence displays the necessity of a powerful cause; their frame proves the cause to be intelligent, good, and wise. The meanest of the works of nature, (if any of nature's works may be called mean); the arrangement necessary for the production of the smallest plant; requires in the cause a degree of power and wisdom, which infinitely transcends the sublimest exertions of human ability. What then shall we say of the cause that produces an animal, a rational soul, a world, a system of worlds,

an universe? Shall we say, that infinite power and wisdom are not necessary attributes of that universal cause, though they be necessary attributes of the cause, that produces a plant? Shall we say, that the maker of a plant may be acknowledged to be powerful, intelligent, and wise; because there are many other things in nature that resemble a plant; but that we cannot rationally acknowledge the maker of the universe to be wise, powerful, or intelligent, because there is nothing which the universe resembles, or to which it may be compared? Can the man who argues in this manner have any meaning to his words?

The other cavils thrown out against the divine attributes, in this flimsy essay, I may perhaps have occasion to animadvert on hereafter. Meantime to those readers who may be in danger from them, I would recommend a careful perusal of Butler's Analogy of natural and revealed religion.

SECTION VI.

Of Probable or Experimental Reasoning.

In all our reasonings from the cause to the effect, we proceed on a supposition, and a belief, that the course of nature will continue to be in time to come what we experience it to be at present, and remember it to have been in time past. This presumption of continuance is the foundation of all our judgments concerning future events; and this, in many cases, determines our conviction as effectually as any proof or demonstration whatsoever; although the conviction arising from it be different in kind from what is produced by strict demonstration, as well as from those kinds of conviction that attend the evidence of sense, memory, and abstract intuition. The highest degree of conviction in reasoning from causes to effects, is called *moral certainty;* and the inferiour degrees result from that species of evidence which is called *probability* or *verisimilitude*. That all men will die; that the sun will rise to-morrow, and the sea ebb and flow; that sleep will continue to refresh, and food to nourish us; that the same articulate sounds which to-day communicate the ideas of virtue and vice, meat and drink, man and beast, will to-morrow com-

municate the same ideas to the same persons, —no man can doubt, without being accounted a fool. In these, and in all other instances where our experience of the past has been equally extensive and uniform, our judgment concerning the future amounts to moral certainty: we believe, with full assurance, or at least without doubt, that the same laws of nature, which have hitherto operated, will continue to operate, as long as we foresee no cause to interrupt or hinder their operation.

But no person who attends to his own mind will say, that, in these cases, our belief, or conviction, is the effect of a proof, or any thing like it. If reasoning be at all employed, it is only in order to give us a clear view of our past experience with regard to the point in question. When this view is obtained, reasoning is no longer necessary; the mind, by its own innate force, and in consequence of an irresistible and instinctive impulse, infers the future from the past, immediately, and without the intervention of any argument. The sea has ebbed and flowed twice every day in time past; therefore the sea will continue to ebb and flow twice every day in the time to come,—is by no means a logical deduction of a conclusion from premises.*

* This remark was first made by Mr. HUME. See it

When our experience of the past has not been uniform nor extensive, our opinion with regard to the future falls short of moral certainty; and amounts only to a greater or less degree of persuasion, according to the greater or smaller proportion of favourable instances: we say, such an event will probably happen, such another is wholly improbable. If a medicine has proved salutary in one instance, and hurtful in five, a physician would not choose to recommend it, except in a desperate case; and would then consider its success as a thing rather to be wished than expected. An equal number of favourable and unfavourable instances leave the mind in a state of suspense, without exciting the smallest degree of assurance on either side, except, perhaps, what may arise from our being more interested on the one side than on the other. A physician influenced by such evidence would say, "My patient may recover, and he may die: I am "sorry to say, that the former event is not one "whit more probable than the latter." When the favourable instances exceed the unfavourable in number, we begin to think the future event in some degree probable; and more or less so, ac-

illustrated at great length in his essays, part 2. sect. 4. See also Dr. Campbell's dissertation on miracles, p. 13, 14. edit. 2.

cording to the surplus of favourable instances. A few favourable instances, without any mixture of unfavourable ones, render an event probable in a pretty high degree; but the favourable experience must be both extensive and uniform, before it can produce moral certainty.

A man brought into being at maturity, and placed in a desert island, would abandon himself to despair, when he first saw the sun set, and the night come on; for he could have no expectation that ever the day would be renewed. But he is transported with joy, when he again beholds the glorious orb appearing in the east, and the heavens and the earth illuminated as before. He again views the declining sun with apprehension, yet not without hope; the second night is less dismal than the first, but is still uncomfortable, on account of the weakness of the probability produced by one favourable instance. As the instances grow more numerous, the probability becomes stronger and stronger: yet it may be questioned, whether a man in these circumstances would ever arrive at so high a degree of moral certainty in this matter as we experience; who know, not only that the sun has risen every day since we began to exist, but also that the same phenomenon has happened regularly for more than five thousand years, without failing in a sin-

gle instance. The judgment of our great epick poet appears nowhere to more advantage than in his eighth book; where Adam relates to the angel what passed in his mind immediately after his awaking into life. The following passage is at once transcendently beautiful, and philosophically just.

"While thus I call'd, and stray'd I knew not whither,
"From where I first drew air, and first beheld
"This happy light, when answer none return'd,
"On a green shady bank, profuse of flowers,
"Pensive I sat me down; there gentle sleep
"*First* found me, and with soft oppression seiz'd
"My drowsed sense; *untroubled, though I thought*
"*I then was passing to my former state*
"*Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve.*"*

Paradise Lost, b. 8. l. 283.

Adam at this time had no experience of sleep, and therefore could not, with any probability, expect that he was to recover from it. Its approaches were attended with feelings similar to those he had experienced when awaking from nonexistence, and would naturally suggest that idea to his mind; and as he had no reason to expect that his life was to continue, would intimate

* The beauty of these lines did not escape the elegant and judicious Addison; but that author does not assign the reason of his approbation. Spect. No. 345.

the probability that he was again upon the verge of an insensible state.*

Now it is evident, from what has been already said, that the degree of probability must be intuitively perceived, or the degree of assurance spontaneously and instinctively excited in the mind, upon the bare consideration of the instances on either side; and that without any medium of argument to connect the future event with the past experience. Reasoning may be employed in bringing the instances into view; but when that is done, it is no longer necessary. And if you were to argue with a man, in order to convince him that a certain future event is not so improbable as he seems to think, you would only make him take notice of some favourable instance which he had overlooked, or endeavour to render him suspicious of the reality of some of the unfavourable instances; leaving it to himself to estimate the degree of probability. If he continue refractory, notwithstanding that his view of the

* "Several things (says Butler) greatly affect all our "living powers, and at length suspend the exercise of "them; as, for instance, drowsiness, increasing till it "ends in sound sleep: and from hence we might have im- "agined it would destroy them till we found by ex- "perience the weakness of this way of judging."

Butler's Analogy, part 1. *chap.* 1.

subject is the same with yours, he can be reasoned with in no other way, than by your appealing to the common sense of mankind.

To the supreme intelligence all knowledge is intuitive and certain. But it is not unreasonable to suppose, that probabilities of one sort or other may sometimes employ the understanding of all created beings. To man, probability (as an excellent author † observes) is the very guide of life.

SECTION VII.

Of Analogical Reasoning.

Reasoning from analogy, when traced up to its source, will be found in like manner to terminate in a certain instinctive propensity, implanted in us by our Maker, which leads us to expect, that similar causes, in similar circumstances, do probably produce, or will probably produce, similar effects. The probability which this kind of evidence is fitted to illustrate, does, like the former, admit of a vast variety of degrees, from absolute doubting up to moral certainty When the ancient philosopher, who was shipwrecked in a strange country, discovered certain geometrical figures

† Butler's Anology. Introduction.

drawn upon the sand by the sea shore, he was naturally led to believe, with a degree of assurance not inferiour to moral certainty, that the country was inhabited by men, some of whom were men of study and science, like himself. Had these figures been less regular, and liker chance work, the presumption from analogy, of the country being inhabited, would have been weaker; and had they been of such a nature as left it altogether dubious, whether they were the work of accident or of design, the evidence would have been too ambiguous to serve as a foundation for any opinion.

In reasoning from analogy, we argue *from* a fact or thing experienced *to* something similar not experienced; and from our view of the former arises an opinion with regard to the latter; which opinion will be found to imply a greater or less degree of assurance, according as the instance *from* which we argue is more or less similar to the instance *to* which we argue. Why the degree of our assurance is determined by the degree of likeness, we cannot tell; but we know by experience, that this is the case: and by experience also we know, that our assurance, such as it is, arises immediately in the mind, whenever we fix our attention on the circumstances in which the probable event is expected, so as to trace their

resemblance to those circumstances in which we have known a similar event to take place. A child, who has been burnt with a redhot coal, is careful to avoid touching the flame of a candle; for as the visible qualities of the latter are like to those of the former, he expects, with a very high degree of assurance, that the effects produced by the candle, operating on his fingers, will be similar to those produced by the burning coal. And it deserves to be remarked, that the judgment a child forms on these occasions may arise, and often doth arise previous to education and reasoning, and while experience is very limited. Knowing that a lighted candle is a dangerous object, he will be shy of touching a glowworm, or a piece of wet fish shining in the dark, because of their resemblance to the flame of a candle: but as this resemblance is but imperfect, his judgment, with regard to the consequences of touching these objects, will probably be more inclined to doubt, than in the former case, where the instances were more similar.

Those who are acquainted with astronomy, think it probable, that the planets are inhabited by living creatures, on account of their being in all other respects so like our earth. A man, who thinks them not much bigger than they appear to the eye, never dreams of such a notion; for to

him they seem in every respect unlike our earth: and there is no other way of bringing him over to the astronomer's opinion, than by explaining to him those particulars in which the planets and our earth resemble one another. As soon as he comprehends these particulars, and this resemblance, his mind of its own accord admits the probability of the new opinion, without being led to it by any medium of proof, connecting the facts he hath experienced with other similar and probable facts lying beyond the reach of his experience. Such a proof indeed could not be given. If he were not convinced of the probability by the bare view of the facts, you would impute his perseverance in his old opinion, either to obstinacy, or to want of common sense; two mental disorders for which logick provides no remedy.

SECTION VIII.

Of Faith in Testimony.

THERE are in the world many men, whose declaration concerning any fact which they have seen, and of which they are competent judges, would engage my belief as effectually as the evidence of my own senses. A metaphysician may tell me, that this implicit confidence in testimony

is unworthy of a philosopher, and that my faith ought to be more rational. It may be so; but I believe as before notwithstanding. And I find that all men have the same confidence in the testimony of certain persons; and that if a man should refuse to think as other men do in this matter, he would be called obstinate, whimsical, narrowminded, and a fool. If, after the experience of so many ages, men are still disposed to believe the word of an honest man, and find no inconvenience in doing so, I must conclude, that it is not only natural, but rational, expedient, and manly, to credit such testimony: and though I were to peruse volumes of metaphysick written in proof of the fallibility of testimony, I should still, like the rest of the world, believe credible testimony without fear of inconvenience. I know very well, that testimony is not admitted in proof of any doctrine in mathematicks, because the evidence of that science is of a different kind. But is truth to be found in mathematicks only? Is the geometrician the only person who exerts a rational belief? Do we never find conviction arise in our minds, except when we contemplate an intuitive axiom, or run over a mathematical demonstration? In natural philosophy, a science not inferiour to pure mathematicks in the certainty of its conclusions, testimony is admitted as a sufficient proof of many facts. To believe testimony, there-

fore, is agreeable to nature, to reason, and to sound philosophy.

When we believe the declaration of an honest man, in regard to facts of which he has had experience, we suppose, that by the view or perception of those facts, his senses have been affected in the same manner as ours would have been, if we had been in his place. So that faith in testimony is in part resolvable into that conviction which is produced by the evidence of sense; at least if we did not believe our senses, we could not, without absurdity, believe testimony; if we have any tendency to doubt the evidence of sense, we must, in regard to testimony, be equally sceptical. Those philosophers, therefore, who would persuade us to reject the evidence of sense, among whom are to be reckoned all who deny the existence of matter, are not to be considered as mere theorists, whose speculations are of too abstract a nature to do any harm, but as men of very dangerous principles. Not to mention the bad effects of such doctrine upon science in general,* I would only at present call upon the reader to attend to its influence upon our religious opinions and historical knowledge. Testimony is the grand external evidence of christianity. All the miracles wrought by our Saviour, and particularly that

* See below, part 2. chap. 2. sect. 2.

great decisive miracle, his resurrection from the dead, were so many appeals to the senses of men, in proof of his divine mission: and whatever some unthinking cavillers may object, this we affirm to be not only the most proper, but the only proper, kind of external evidence that can be employed, consistently with man's free agency and moral probation, for establishing a popular and universal religion among mankind. Now, if matter has no existence but in our mind, our senses are deceitful: and if so, St. Thomas must have been deceived when he felt, and the rest of the apostles when they saw, the body of their Lord after his resurrection; and all the facts recorded in history, both sacred and civil, were no better than dreams or delusions, with which perhaps St. Matthew, St. John, and St. Luke, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Cesar, were affected, but which they had no more ground of believing to be real, than I have of believing, in consequence of my having dreamed it, that I was last night in Constantinople. Nay, if I admit the nonexistence of matter, I must believe, that what my senses declare to be true, is not only not truth, but contrary to it. For does not this philosophy teach, that what seems to human sense to exist does not exist; and that what seems corporeal is incorporeal? And are not existence, and nonexistence, materiality and immate-

riality, contraries? Now, if men ought to believe the contrary of what their senses declare to be true, the evidence of all history, of all testimony, and indeed of all external perception, is no longer any evidence of the reality of the facts warranted by it; but becomes, rather a proof that those facts did never happen. If it be urged, as an objection to this reasoning, that BERKELEY was a christian, notwithstanding his scepticism (or paradoxical belief) in other matters; I answer, that though he maintained the doctrine of the nonexistence of body, there is no evidence that he understood it: nay, there is positive evidence that he did not; as I shall have occasion to show afterwards.*

Again, when we believe a man's word, because we know him to be honest, or, in other words, have had experience of his veracity, all reasoning on such testimony is supported by the evidence of experience, and by our presumption of the continuance of the laws of nature: the first evidence resolves itself into instinctive conviction, and the second is itself an instinctive presumption. The principles of common sense, therefore, are the foundation of all true reasoning concerning testimony of this kind.

It is said by Mr. HUME, in his essay on mira-

* See part 2. chap. 2. sect. 2. of this essay.

cles, that our belief of any fact from the report of eyewitnesses is derived from no other principle than experience; that is, from our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the report of witnesses. This doctrine is confuted with great elegance and precision, and with invincible force of argument, in Dr. Campbell's *dissertation on miracles*. It is, indeed, like most of Mr. HUME's capital doctrines, repugnant to matter of fact: for our credulity is greatest when our experience is least; that is, when we are children; and generally grows less and less, in proportion as our experience becomes more and more extensive: the very contrary of which must happen, if Mr. HUME's doctrine were true.

There is then in man a propensity to believe testimony antecedent to that experience, which Mr. HUME supposes, of the conformity of facts to the report of witnesses. But there is another sort of experience, which may perhaps have some influence in determining children to believe in testimony. Man is naturally disposed to speak as he thinks; and most men do so: for the greatest liars speak truth much oftener than they utter falsehood. It is unnatural for human creatures to falsify; and they never think of departing from the truth, except they have some end to answer

by it. Accordingly children, while their native simplicity remains uncorrupted, while they have no vice to disguise, no punishment to fear, and no artificial scheme to promote, do always speak as they think: and so generally is their veracity acknowledged, that it has passed into a proverb, That children and fools tell truth. Now I am not certain, but this their innate propensity to speak truth, may in part account for their readiness to believe what others speak. They do not suspect the veracity of others, because they are conscious and confident of their own. However, there is nothing absurd or unphilosophical in supposing, that they believe testimony by one law of their nature, and speak truth by another. I seek not therefore to resolve the former principle into the latter; I mention them for the sake only of observing, that whether they be allowed to be different principles, or different effects of the same principle, our general doctrine remains equally clear, namely, That all reasoning concerning the evidence of testimony does finally terminate in the principles of common sense. This is true, as far as our faith in testimony is resolvable into experimental conviction; because we have already shown, that all reasoning from experience is resolvable into intuitive principles, either of certain or of probable evidence; and surely it is no

less true, as far as our faith in testimony is itself instinctive; and such as cannot be resolved into any higher principle.

Our faith in testimony does often, but not always, amount to absolute certainty. That there is such a city as Constantinople, such a country as Lapland, and such a mountain as the peak of Teneriffe; that there were such men as Hannibal and Julius Cesar; that England was conquered by William the Norman; that Charles I. was beheaded;—of these, and such like truths, every person acquainted with history and geography accounts himself absolutely certain. When a number of persons, not acting in concert, having no interest to disguise the truth, and sufficient judges of that to which they bear testimony, concur in making the same report, it would be accounted madness not to believe them. Nay, when a number of witnesses, separately examined, and having had no opportunity to concert a plan beforehand, do all agree in their declarations, we make no scruple of yielding full faith to their testimony, even though we have no evidence of their honesty and skill; nay, though they be notorious both for knavery and folly: because the fictions of the human mind being infinite, it is impossible that each of these witnesses should, by mere accident, devise the very same circumstan-

ces; if therefore their declarations concur, this is a proof, that there is no fiction in the case, and that they all speak from real experience and knowledge. The inference we form on these occasions is supported by arguments drawn from our experience; and all arguments of this sort are resolvable into the principles of common sense. In general, it will be found true of all our reasoning concerning testimony, that they are founded, either mediately or immediately, upon instinctive conviction or instinctive assent; so that he who has resolved to believe nothing but what he can give a reason for, can never, consistently with this resolution, believe any thing, either as certain or as probable, upon the testimony of other men.

SECTION IX.

Conclusion of this Chapter.

The conclusion to which we are led by the above induction would perhaps be admitted by some to be self-evident, or at least to stand in no great need of illustration; to others it might have been proved *a priori* in very few words; but to the greater part of readers, a detail of particulars

may be necessary, in order to produce that *steady and well grounded conviction* which it is my ambition to establish.

The argument *a priori* might be comprehended in the following words. If there be any creatures in human shape, who deny the distinction between truth and falsehood, or who are unconscious of that distinction, they are far beyond the reach, and below the notice, of philosophy, and therefore have no concern in this inquiry. Whoever is sensible of that distinction, and is willing to acknowledge it, must confess, that truth is something fixed and determinate, depending not upon man, but upon the Author of nature. The fundamental principles of truth must therefore rest upon their own evidence, perceived intuitively by the understanding. If they did not, if reasoning were necessary to enforce them, they must be exposed to perpetual vicissitude, and appear under a different form in every individual, according to the peculiar turn and character of his reasoning powers. Were this the case, no man could know, of any proposition, whether it were true or false, till after he had heard all the arguments that had been urged for and against it; and, even then, he could not know with certainty, whether he had heard all that could be urged: future disputants might overturn the former argu-

ments, and produce new ones, to continue unanswered for a while, and then submit, in their turn, to their successours. Were this the case, there could be no such thing as an appeal to the common sense of mankind, even as in a state of nature there can be no appeal to the law; every man would be "a law unto himself," not in morals only, but in science of every kind.

We sometimes repine at the narrow limits prescribed to human capacity. *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further*, seems a hard prohibition, when applied to the operations of mind. But as in the material world, it is to this prohibition man owes his security and existence; so, in the immaterial system, it is to this we owe our dignity, our virtue, and our happiness. A beacon blazing from a well known promontory is a welcome object to the bewildered mariner; who is so far from repining that he has not the beneficial light in his own keeping, that he is sensible its utility depends on its being placed on the firm land, and committed to the care of others.

We have now proved, that "except we believe "many things without proof, we never can be- "lieve any thing at all; for that all sound rea- "soning must ultimately rest on the principles "of common sense, that is, on principles intui- "tively certain, or intuitively probable; and, con-

"sequently, that common sense, is the ultimate "judge of truth, to which reason must continu- "ally act in subordination."* To common sense, therefore, all truth must be conformable; this is its fixed and invariable standard. And whatever contradicts common sense, or is inconsistent with that standard, though supported by arguments that are deemed unanswerable, and by names that are celebrated by all the criticks, academies, and potentates on earth, is not truth but falsehood. In a word, the dictates of common sense are, in respect to human knowledge in general, what the axioms of geometry are in respect to mathematicks: on the supposition that those axioms are false or dubious, all mathematical reasoning falls to the ground; and on the supposition that the dictates of common sense are erroneous or deceitful, all science, truth and virtue, are vain.

I know not but it may be urged as an objection to this doctrine, that, if we grant common sense to be the ultimate judge in all disputes, a great part of ancient and modern philosophy becomes useless. I admit the objection with all my heart, in its full force, and with all its consequences; and yet I must repeat, that if common

* See part i. chap. 1. sub. fin.

sense be supposed fallacious, all knowledge is at an end; and that even a demonstration of the fallacy would itself be fallacious and frivolous. For if the dictates of my nature deceive me in one case, how shall I know that they do not deceive me in another? When a philosopher demonstrates to me, that matter exists not but in my mind, and, independent on me and my faculties, has no existence at all; before I admit his demonstration, I must disbelieve all my senses, and distrust every principle of belief within me: before I admit his demonstration, I must be convinced, that I and all mankind are fools; that our Maker made us such, and from the beginning intended to impose on us; and that it was not till about the six thousandth year of the world when this imposture was discovered; and then discovered, not by a divine revelation, not by any rational investigation of the laws of nature, not by any inference from previous truths of acknowledged authority, but by a pretty play of English and French words, to which the learned have given the name of metaphysical reasoning. Before I admit this pretended demonstration, I must bring myself to believe what I find to be incredible; which seems to me not a whit less difficult than to perform what is impossible. And when all this is done, if it were possible that all this could be

done, pray what is science, or truth, or falsehood? Shall I believe nothing? or shall I believe every thing? Or am I capable either of belief, or of disbelief? Or do I exist? or is there such a thing as existence?

The end of all science, and indeed of every useful pursuit, is to make men happier, by improving them in wisdom and virtue. I beg leave to ask, whether the present race of men owe any part of their virtue, wisdom, or happiness, to what metaphysicians have written in proof of the nonexistence of matter, and the necessity of human actions? If it be answered, that our happiness, wisdom, and virtue, are not at all affected by such controversies, then I must affirm, that all such controversies are useless. And if it be true, that they have a tendency to promote wrangling, which of all kinds of conversation is the most unpleasant, and the most unprofitable; or vain polemical disquisition, which cannot be carried on without waste of time, and prostitution of talents; or scepticism, which tends to make a man uncomfortable in himself, and unserviceable to others: then I must affirm, that all such controversies are both useless and mischievous: and that the world would be more wise, more virtuous, and more happy, without them. But it is said, that they improve the understanding, and

render it more capable of discovering truth, and detecting errour. Be it so: but though bars and locks render our houses secure; and though acuteness of hearing and feeling be a valuable endowment; it will not follow, that thieves are a publick blessing; or that the man is entitled to my gratitude, who quickens my touch and hearing, by putting out my eyes.

It is further said, that such controversies make us sensible of the weakness of human reason, and the imperfection of human knowledge; and for the sanguinary principles of bigotry and enthusiasm, substitute the milky ones of scepticism and moderation. And this is conceived to be of prodigious emolument to mankind; because a firm attachment to religion, which a man may call bigotry if he pleases, doth often give rise to a persecuting spirit; whereas a perfect indifference about it, which some men are goodnatured enough to call moderation, is a principle of great goodbreeding, and gives no sort of disturbance, either in private or publick life. This is a plea on which our modern scepticks plume themselves not a little. And who will venture to arraign the virtue or the sagacity of these projectors? To accomplish so great effects by means so simple; to prevent such dreadful calamities by so innocent an artifice; does it not display the perfection

of benevolence and wisdom? Truly I can hardly imagine such another scheme, except the following. Suppose a physician of the Sangrado school, out of zeal for the interest of the faculty, and the publick good, to prepare a bill to be laid before the parliament in these words: "That whereas good "health, especially when of long standing, has a "tendency to prepare the human frame for in-"flammatory distempers, which have been known "to give extreme pain to the unhappy patient, "and sometimes even bring him to the grave; "and whereas the said health, by making us "brisk and hearty, and happy, is apt also, on "some occasions, to make us disorderly and li-"centious, to the great detriment of glass win-"dows, lanthorns, and watchmen: Be it therefore "enacted, That all the inhabitants of these realms, "for the peace of government, and the repose of "the subject, be compelled, on pain of death, to "bring their bodies down to a consumptive habit; "and that henceforth no person presume to walk "abroad with a cane, on pain of having his head "broke with it, and being set in the stocks for "six months; nor to walk at all, except with "crutches, to be delivered at the publick charge "to each person who makes affidavit, that he is "no longer able to walk without them," &c. He who can eradicate conviction from the human

heart, may doubtless prevent all the fatal effects of enthusiasm and bigotry; and if all human bodies were thrown into a consumption, I believe there would be an end of riot, as well as of inflammatory diseases. Whether the inconveniences, or the remedies, be the greater grievance, might perhaps bear a question. Bigotry, enthusiasm, and a persecuting spirit, are very dangerous and destructive; universal scepticism, would, I am sure, be equally so, if it were to infect the generality of mankind. But what has religion and rational conviction to do with either? Nothing more than good health has to do with acute distempers, and rebellious insurrections; or than the peace of government, and tranquillity of the subject, have to do with a gradual decay of our muscular flesh. True religion tends to make men great, and good, and happy; and if so, its doctrines can never be too firmly believed, nor held in too high veneration. And if truth be at all attainable in philosophy, I cannot see why we should scruple to receive it as such, when we have attained it; nor how it can promote candour, goodbreeding, and humanity, to pretend to doubt what we do and must believe, to profess to maintain doctrines of which we are conscious that they shock our understanding, to differ in judgment from all the world except a few metaphysicians, and to ques-

tion the evidence of those principles which all other men think unquestionable and sacred. Conviction, and steadiness of principle, is that which gives dignity, uniformity, and spirit, to human conduct, and without which our happiness can neither be lasting nor sincere. It constitutes, as it were, the vital stamina of a great and manly character: whereas scepticism betrays a sickly understanding, and a levity of mind, from which nothing can be expected but inconsistence and folly. In conjunction with illnature, bad taste, and a hard heart, steadiness and strong conviction will doubtless make a bad man, and scepticism will make a worse: but goodnature, elegant taste, and sensibility of heart, when united with firmness of mind, become doubly respectable; whereas no man can act on the principles of scepticism, without incurring universal contempt. But to return:

Mathematicians, and natural philosophers, do in effect admit the distinction between common sense and reason, as illustrated above; for they are content to rest their sciences either on self-evident axioms, or on experiments warranted by the evidence of external sense. The philosophers who treat of the mind, do also sometimes profess to found their doctrines on the evidence of sense: but this profession is merely verbal, for when-

ever experience contradicts the system, they question the authenticity of that experience, and show you, by a most elaborate investigation, that it is all a cheat. For it is easy to write plausibly on any subject, and in vindication of any doctrine, when either the indolence of the reader, or the nature of the composition, gives the writer an opportunity to avail himself of the ambiguity of language. It is not often that men attend to the operations of the mind; and when they do, it is perhaps with some metaphysical book in their hands, which they read with a resolution to admire or despise, according as the fashion or their humour directs them. In this situation, or even when they are disposed to judge impartially of the writer, their attention to what passes in their own mind is but superficial, and is very apt to be swayed by a secret bias in favour of some theory. And then, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a natural feeling and a prejudice of education; and our deference to the opinion of a favourite author, makes us think it more difficult than it really is, and often leads us to mistake the one for the other. Nay, the very act of studying discomposes our minds a little, and prevents that free play of the faculties from which alone we can judge with accuracy of their real nature.

Besides, language, being originally intended to answer the obvious exigencies of life, and express the qualities of matter, becomes metaphorical when applied to the operations of mind. Thus we talk metaphorically, when we speak of a warm imagination, a sound judgment, a tenacious memory, an enlarged understanding; these epithets being originally and *properly* expressive of material qualities. This circumstance, however obvious, is not always attended to; and hence we are apt to mistake verbal analogies for real ones, and to apply the laws of matter to the operations of mind; and thus, by the mere delusion of words, are led into errour before we are aware, and while our premises seem to be altogether unexceptionable. It is a favourite maxim with LOCKE, as it was with some ancient philosophers, that the human soul, previous to education, is like a piece of white paper, or *tabula rasa;* and this simile harmless as it may appear, betrays our great modern into several important mistakes. It is indeed one of the most unlucky allusions that could have been chosen. The human soul, when it begins to think, is not extended, nor of a white colour, nor incapable of energy, nor wholly unfurnished with ideas, (for, if it think at all, it must have some ideas, according to LOCKE's definition

of the word,*) nor as susceptible of any one impression or character as of any other. Even when the terms we use are not metaphorical, the natural abstruseness of the subject makes them appear somewhat mysterious; and we are apt to consider them as of more significancy than they really are. Had Mr. HUME told the world in plain terms, that virtue is a species of vice, darkness a sort of light, and existence, a kind of nonexistence, I know not what metaphysicians might have thought of the discovery; but sure I am, no reader of tolerable understanding would have paid him any compliments upon it.† But when he

* The word *idea* serves best to stand for whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks. I have used it to express whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking.

Introduction to essay on human understanding, sect. 8.

† Mr. HUME had said, that the only principles of connection among ideas are three, to wit, resemblance, contiguity in time or place, and cause or effect; *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding, sect.* 3. It afterwards occurred to him, that contrary ideas have a tendency to introduce one another into the mind. But instead of adding contrariety to the list of connecting principles, which he ought to have done, and which would have been philosophical, he assumes the metaphysician, and endeavours to prove his enumeration right, by resolving contrariety, as a species, into resemblance and causation, as genera

says, that contrariety is a mixture of causation and resemblance; and, still more, when he brings a formal proof of this most sage remark, he imposes on us by the solemnity of the expression; we conclude, that "more is meant than meets the "ear;" and begin to fancy, not that the author is absurd or unintelligible, but that we have not sagacity enough to discover his meaning. It were tedious to reckon up one half of the impropriеties and errours which have been introduced into the philosophy of human nature, by the indefinite application of the words, *idea*, *impression*, *perception*, *sensation*, &c. Nay, it is well known, that BERKELEY's pretended proof of the nonexistence of matter, at which common sense stood aghast

"Contrast, or contrariety," says he, "is a connection "among ideas, which may perhaps be considered as a "mixture of causation and resemblance. Where two "objects are contrary, the one destroys the other, *i. e.* "is the cause of its annihilation; and the idea of the an- "nihilation of an object implies the idea of its former "existence." Is it possible to make any sense of this? Darkness and light are contrary; the one destroys the other, or is the cause of its annihilation; and the idea of of the annihilation of darkness implies the idea of its former existence. This is given as a proof, that darkness partly resembles light, and partly is the cause of light. Indeed! But, O *si sic omnia dixisset!* This is a harmless absurdity.

for many years, has no better foundation, than the ambiguous use of a word. He who considers these things, will not be much disposed to overvalue metaphysical truth, (as it is called) when it happens to contradict any of the natural sentiments of mankind.

In the laws of nature, when thoroughly understood, there appear no contradictions: it is only in the systems of philosophers that reason and common sense are at variance. No man of common sense ever did or could believe, that the horse he saw coming towards him at full gallop was an idea in his mind, and nothing else; no thief was ever such a fool as to plead in his own defence, that his crime was necessary and unavoidable, for that man is born to pick pockets as the sparks fly upward. When reason invades the rights of common sense, and presumes to arraign that authority by which she herself acts, nonsense and confusion must of necessity ensue; science will soon come to have neither head nor tail, beginning nor end; philosophy will grow contemptible; and its adherents, far from being treated, as in former times, upon the footing of conjurers, will be thought by the vulgar, and by every man of sense, to be little better than downright fools.

AN

ESSAY ON TRUTH.

PART II.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PRECEDING DOCTRINE, WITH INFERENCES.

BUT now a difficulty occurs, which it is not easy to solve. Granting what is said above to be true; that all legitimate reasoning, whether of certain or of probable evidence, does not finally resolve itself into principles of common sense, which we must admit as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority; that therefore common sense is the foundation and the standard of all just reasoning; and that the genuine sentiments of nature are never erroneous: yet by what criterion shall we know a sentiment of nature from a prejudice of education, a dictate of common sense from the fallacy of an inveterate opinion? Must every principle be admitted as true, which we

believe without being able to assign a reason? then where is our security against prejudice and implicit faith? Or must every principle that seems intuitively certain, or intuitively probable, be reasoned upon, that we may know whether it be really what it seems? then where is our security against the abuse so much insisted on, of subjecting common sense to the test of reasoning! At what point must reason stop in its investigations, and the dictates of common sense be admitted as decisive and final?

It is much to be regretted, that this matter has been so little attended to: for a full and satisfactory discussion of it would do more real service to the philosophy of human nature, than all the systems of logick in the world; would at once exalt pneumatology to the dignity of science, by settling it on a firm and unchangeable foundation; and would go a great way to banish sophistry from science, and rid the world of scepticism. This is indeed the grand desideratum in logick; of no less importance to the moral sciences, than the discovery of the longitude to navigation. That I shall fully solve this difficulty, I am not so vain, nor so ignorant, as to imagine. But I humbly hope I shall be able to throw some light on the subject, and contribute a little to facilitate the progress of those who may hereafter engage in the same

pursuit. If I can accomplish even this, I shall do a service to truth, philosophy and mankind: if I should be thought to fail, there is yet something meritorious in the attempt. To have set the example, may be of consequence.

I shall endeavour to conduct the reader to the conclusion I have come to on this subject, by the same steps that led me thither; a method which I presume will be more conspicuous, and more satisfying, than if I were first to lay down a theory, and then assign the reasons. By the way, I cannot help expressing a wish, that this method of investigation were less uncommon, and that philosophers would sometimes explain to us, not only their discoveries, but also the process of thought and experiment, whether accidental or intentional, by which they were led to them.

If the boundary of reason and common sense had never been settled in any science, I would abandon my present scheme as desperate. But when I reflect, that in some of the sciences it has been long settled, with the utmost accuracy, and to universal satisfaction, I conceive better hopes; and flatter myself, that it may perhaps be possible to fix it even in the philosophy of the mind. The sciences in which this boundary has been long settled and acknowledged, are, mathematicks, and natural philosophy; and it is remarkable, that

more truth has been discovered in those sciences than in any other. Now, there is not a more effectual way of learning the rules of any art, than by attending to the practice of those who have performed in it most successfully: a maxim which, I suppose, is no less applicable to the art of investigating truth, than to the mechanical and the fine arts. Let us see then, whether, by attending to the practice of mathematicians and natural philosophers, as contrasted with the practice of those who have treated of the human mind, we can make any discoveries preparatory to the solution of this difficulty.

CHAPTER I.

Confirmation of this Theory from the Practice of Mathematicians and Natural Philosophers.

SECTION I.

THAT the distinction between reason and common sense, as here explained, is acknowledged by mathematicians, we have already shown.* They have been wise enough to trust to the dictates of common sense, and to take that for truth which they were under a necessity of believing, even though it was not in their power to prove it by argument. When a mathematician arrives, in the course of his reasoning, at a principle which he must believe, and which is of itself so evident, that no argument could either illustrate or enforce it, he then knows, that his reason can carry him no further, and he sits down contented; and if he can satisfy himself, that the whole investigation is fairly conducted, and does indeed terminate in this self-evident principle, he is persuaded, that his conclusion is true, and

* See part i. chap. 2. sect. 1.

cannot be false. Whereas the scepticks, from a strange conceit, that the dictates of their understanding are fallacious, and that nature has her roguish emissaries in every corner, commissioned and sworn to play tricks with poor mortals, cannot find in their heart to admit any thing as truth, upon the bare authority of their common sense. It is doubtless a great advantage to geometry, that its first principles are so few, its ideas so distinct, and its language so definite. Yet a captious and paradoxical wrangler might, by dint of sophistry, involve the principles even of this science in confusion, provided he thought it worth his while.* But geometrical paradoxes would not rouse the attention of the publick; whereas moral paradoxes, when men begin to look about for arguments in vindication of impiety and immorality, become interesting, and can hardly fail of a powerful and numerous patronage. The corrupt judge; the prostituted courtier; the statesman who enriches himself by the plunder and blood of his country; the pettifogger, who fattens on the spoils of the fatherless and the widow; the op-

* The author of the *treatise of human nature* has actually attempted this in his first volume; but finding, no doubt, that the publick would not take any concern in that part of his system, he has not republished it in his ESSAYS.

pressor, who to pamper his own beastly appetite, abandons the deserving peasant to beggary and despair; the hypocrite, the debauchee, the gamester, the blasphemer, prick up their ears when they are told, that a celebrated author has written a book containing such doctrines, or leading to such consequences, as the following: "That "moral and intellectual virtues are nearly of the "same kind:"* in other words, That to want honesty, and to want understanding, are equally the objects of moral disapprobation: "That every "human action is necessary, and could not have "been different from what it is:"† "That when "we speak of power as an attribute of any being, "God himself, not excepted, we use words without meaning: That we can form no idea of "power, nor of any being indued with any "power, *much less* of one indued with infinite "power; and that we can never have reason to "believe, that any object, or quality of an object, "exists, of which we cannot form an idea:‡ That "it is unreasonable to believe God to be infinitely wise and good, while there is any evil or "disorder in the universe; and that we have no

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 3. part 3. sect. 4.

† Hume's Essays, vol. 2. p. 91. edit. 1767.

‡ Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 284. 307. 432. &c.

"good reason to think, that the universe proceeds "from a cause:* That the external world does "not exist, or at least that its existence may "reasonably be doubted;"† and "that if the "external world be once called in doubt, we "shall be at a loss to find arguments, by which "we may prove the existence of the Supreme "Being, or any of his attributes:‡ That those "who believe any thing certainly, are fools;"‖ "That adultery must be practised, if men would "obtain all the advantages of life; that, if gener- "ally practised, it would in time cease to be "scandalous; and that, if practised secretly and "frequently, it would by degrees come to be "thought no crime at all:** "That the question "concerning the substance of the soul is unintel- "ligible:†† That matter and motion may often be "regarded as the cause of thought:‡‡ and, That "the soul of man becomes every different mo- "ment a different being:"‖‖ from which doctrine

* Hume's essay on a particular providence, and future state.

† Berkeley and Hume, *passim.*

‡ Hume's essay on the sceptical philosophy, part 1.

‖ Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1 p. 468.

** Hume's Essays, vol. 2. p. 409. edit. 1767.

†† Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 434.

‡‡ Id. ibid.

‖‖ Id. vol. 1. p. 48.

it must follow as a consequence, that the actions I performed last year, or this morning, whether virtuous or vitious, are no more imputable to me, than the virtues of Aristides are imputable to Nero, or the crimes of Nero to the MAN OF ROSS.

I know no geometrical axiom, more perspicuous, more evident, more generally acknowledged, than this proposition, (which every man believes of himself) "My body exists;" yet this has been denied and volumes written to prove it false. Who will pretend to set bounds to this spirit of scepticism and sophistry? Where are the principles that can stop its progress, when it has already attacked the existence, both of the human body, and of the human soul? When it denies, and attempts to disprove this, I cannot see why it may not as well deny a whole to be greater than a part, the radii of the same circle to be equal to one another; and affirm, that two right lines do contain a space, and that it is possible for the same thing to be and not to be.

Had our scepticks been consulted when the first geometrical institutions were compiled, they would have given a strange turn to the face of affairs. They would have demanded reasons for the belief of every axiom: and as none could have been given, would have suspected a fallacy; and probably (for the art of metaphysical book-

making is not of difficult attainment) have made books to prove *a priori*, that an axiom, from its very nature, cannot be true; or at least that we cannot with certainty pronounce whether it is so or not. "Take heed to yourselves, gentlemen; "you are going to lay the foundations of a "science; be careful to lay them as deep as pos- "sible. Let the love of doubt and disputation "animate you to invincible perseverance. You "must go deeper; truth (if there be any such "thing) loves profundity and darkness. Hitherto "I see you quite distinctly; and, let me tell you, "that is a strong presumption against your me- "thod of operation. I would not give two pence "for that philosophy which is obvious and intel- "ligible.* Tear up that prejudice, that I may "see what supports it. I see you cannot move "it, and therefore am disposed to question its "stability; you cannot pierce it, therefore who "knows but it may be made of unsound mate- "rials? There is no trusting to appearances. It "is the glory of a philosopher to doubt; yea, he "must doubt, both when he is doubtful, and when "he is not doubtful.† Sometimes, indeed, we phi-

* See Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 3, 4

† "A true sceptick will be diffident of his philoso-

" losophers are absolutely and necessarily deter-
" mined to live, and talk, and act, like other people,
" and to believe the existence both of ourselves and
" of other things: but to this absolute and necessary
" determination, we ought not to submit, but in
" every incident of life still to preserve our
" scepticism. Yes, friend, I tell you, we ought
" still to do what is contrary to that to which we
" are absolutely and necessarily determined.* I
" see you preparing to speak; but I tell you once
" for all, that if you reason or believe any thing
" *certainly*, you are a fool.†—Good sir, how deep

" phical doubts, as well as of his philosophical convic-
" tion." *Treatise of Human Nature, vol.* 1 *p.* 474.

* " I dine, I play a game at backgammon, I converse,
" and am merry with my friends; and when, after three
" or four hours' amusement, I would return to these
" speculations, they appear so cold, so strained, and so
" ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into
" them any further. Here then I find myself absolutely
" and necessarily determined to live, and talk, and act,
" like other people in the common affairs of life."

Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. *p.* 467.

" In all the incidents of life we ought still to preserve
" our scepticism. If we believe that fire warms, or
" water refreshes, it is only because it costs us too much
" pains to think otherwise. Nay, if we are philosophers,
" it ought only to be upon sceptical principles."

Id. p. 469.

† " If I must be a fool, as all those who reason or be-

" must we dig? Is not this a sure foundation?—I " have no reason to think so, as I cannot see " what is under it.—Then we must dig down- " wards *in infinitum!*—And why not? You think " you are arrived at certainty. This very conceit " of yours is a proof that you have not gone deep " enough: for you must know, that the under- " standing, when it acts alone, and according to " its most general principles, entirely subverts " itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evi- " dence in any proposition, either in philosophy " or common life.* This to the illiterate vulgar " may seem as great a contradiction or paradox, " as if we were to talk of a man's jumping down " his own throat: but we whose brains are heated " with metaphysick, are not startled at paradoxes " or contradictions, because we are ready to re- " ject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon " no opinion even as more probable or more likely " than another.† You are no true philosopher if

" lieve any thing *certainly*, are, my follies shall at least " be natural and agreeable." *Id. p.* 468.

* Verbatim from Treatise of Human Nature, vol. I p. 464. 465.

† " The intense view of these manifold contradictions " and imperfections in human reason, has so wrought " upon me, and heated my brain, that I am ready to re- " ject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no

"you either begin or end your inquiries with "the belief of any thing.—Well, sir, you may "doubt and dispute as long as you please; but I "believe that I am come to a sure foundation: "here therefore will I begin to build, for I am "certain there can be no danger in trusting to "the stability of that which is immovable.—Cer- "tain! Poor credulous fool! Hark ye, sir, you "may be what the vulgar call an honest man, and "a good workman; but I am certain (I mean I "am in doubt whether I may not be certain) that "you are no philosopher. Philosopher indeed! to "take a thing of such consequence for granted, "without proof, without examination! I hold you "four to one, that I shall demonstrate *a priori*, "that this same edifice of yours will be good for "nothing. I am inclined to think, that we live in "too early a period to discover ANY PRINCIPLES "that will bear the examination of the latest "posterity; the world, sir, is not yet arrived at "the years of discretion: it will be time enough, "two or three thousand years hence, for men to "begin to dogmatize, and affirm, that two and "two are four; that a triangle is not a square; "that the radii of the same circle are equal; that

"opinion even as more probable or likely than another."
Treatise of Human Nature, *vol.* 1. *p.* 466.

" a whole is greater than one of its parts; that " ingratitude and murder are crimes; that bene- " volence, justice, and fortitude, are virtues; that " fire burns; that the sun shines; that human " creatures exist, or that there is such a thing " as existence. These are points, which our pos- " terity, if they be wise, will probably reject.*

* " Perhaps we are still in too early an age of the " world, to discover *any principles* which will bear the " examination of the latest posterity."

Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. *p.* 473.

Some perhaps may blame me for laying any stress on detached sentences, and for understanding these strong expressions in a strict signification. But it is not my intention to take any unfair advantages. I should willingly impute these absurd sentences and expressions to the author's inadvertency: but then I must impute the whole system to the same cause; for they imply nothing that is not again and again inculcated, either directly or indirectly, in Mr. Hume's writings. It is true some of them are self-contradictory, and all of them strongly display the futility of this pretended science. But who is to blame for this? Again, if this science be so useless, and if its inutility be sometimes acknowledged even by Mr. Hume himself, why, it may be said, so much zeal in confuting it? For this plain reason, because it is immoral and pernicious, as well as unprofitable and absurd; and because, with all its absurdity, it has been approved and admired; and been the occasion of evil to individuals, and of detriment as well as danger to society.

" These are points, which if they do not reject,
" they will be arrant fools. This is my judgment,
" and I am certain it is right. I maintain, indeed,
" that mankind are certain of nothing: but I
" maintain, notwithstanding, that my own opin-
" ions are true. And if any body is illnatured
" enough to call this a contradiction, I protest
" against his judgment, and once for all declare,
" that I mean not either to contradict myself, or
" to acknowledge myself guilty of self-contradic-
" tion."

I am well aware, that mathematical certainty is not to be expected in any science but mathematicks. But I suppose that in every science, some kind of certainty is attainable, or something at least sufficient to command belief: and whether this rest on self-evident axioms, or on the evidence of sense, memory, or testimony, it is still certain to me, if I feel that I must believe it. And in every science, as well as in geometry, I presume it would be consistent both with logick and with good sense, *to take that for an ultimate principle, which forces our belief by its own intrinsick evidence, and which cannot by any reasoning be rendered more evident.*

SECTION II.

In natural philosophy, the evidence of sense and mathematical evidence go hand in hand; and the one produces conviction as effectually as the other. A natural philosopher would make a poor figure, should he take it in his head to disbelieve or distrust the evidence of his senses. The time was, indeed, when matters were on a different footing; when physical truths were made out, not by experiment and observation, but by dint of syllogism, or in the more compendious way of *ipse dixit*. But natural philosophy was then, what the philosophy of the mind in the hands of our scepticks is now, a system of sophisms, contrived for the vindication of false theories.

That natural philosophers never question the evidence of sense, nor seek either to disprove or to correct it by reasoning, is a position, which to many may at first sight seem disputable. I foresee several objections, but shall content myself with examining two of the most important. And these I shall set in such a light, as will, I hope, show them to be inconclusive, and at the same time preclude all other objections.

1. Do we not, (it will be said) both in our phy-

sical observations, and in the common affairs of life, reject the evidence of sight, in regard to the magnitude, extension, figure, and distance of visible objects, and trust to that of touch, which we know to be less fallacious? I see two buildings on the top of yonder mountain; they seem to my eyes to be only three or four feet asunder, of a round shape, and not larger than my two thumbs: but I have been at the place, and having ascertained their distance, size, and figure, by touch, or mensuration, I know, that they are square towers, forty yards asunder, and fifty feet high. Do I not in this case reject the evidence of my sight as fallacious, and trust to that of touch? And what is it but reason that induces me to do so? How then can it be said, that from the evidence of sense there is no appeal to reason? It will, however, be easy to show, that in this instance we distrust neither sight nor touch, but believe implicitly in both; not because we can confirm their evidence by reasoning, but because the law of our nature will not permit us to disbelieve their evidence.

Do you perceive these two objects when you shut your eyes? No.—It is, then, by your sight only that you perceive them? It is.—Does your sight perceive any thing in these two objects, but a certain visible magnitude, extension and

figure? No.—Do you believe that these towers really appear to your eyes round, three feet asunder, and of the size of your thumbs? Yes, I believe they have that appearance to my eyes.—And do you not also believe, that, to the eyes of all men who see as you do, and look at these objects from the place in which you now stand, they have the very same appearance? I have no reason to think otherwise.—You believe, then, that the visible magnitude, distance, and shape, of these towers, is what it appears to be? Or do you think that your eyes see wrong? Be sure, the visible magnitude, figure, and distance, are not different from what I perceive them to be.—But how do you know, that what you perceive by sight either exists, or is what it appears to be? Not by reasoning, but by instinct.

Of the visible magnitude, extension, and figure, our eyes give us a true perception. It is a law of nature, That while visible objects retire from the eye, the visible magnitude becomes less as the distance becomes greater: and the proportion between the increasing distance and the decreasing visible magnitude is so well known, that the visible magnitude of any given object placed at a given distance, may be ascertained with geometrical exactness. The true visible magnitude of objects is therefore a fixed and determinate

thing; that is, the visible magnitude of the same object, at the same distance, is always the same: we believe, that it is what our eyes perceive it to be; if we did not, the art of perspective would be impossible; at least we could not acknowledge, that there is any truth in that art.

But the object (you reply) seems no bigger than your thumb; and you believe it to be fifty feet high: how is that sensation reconcileable with this belief? You may easily reconcile them, by recollecting, (what is obvious enough) that the object of your belief is the tangible magnitude; that of your sensation, the visible. The visible magnitude is a perception of sense; and we have seen already, that it is conceived to be a true, and not a fallacious perception; the tangible magnitude you do not at present perceive by sense; you only remember it; or perhaps you infer it from the visible, in consequence of your knowledge of the laws of perspective. When we see a lump of salt at a little distance, we may perhaps take it for sugar. Is this a false sensation? Is this a proof, either that our taste, or that our sight is fallacious? No: this is only an erroneous opinion formed upon a true sensation. A false sensation we cannot suppose it to be, without supposing that tastes are perceived by the eyes. And you cannot believe your opinion of

the magnitude of these towers to be a false sensation, except you believe that tangible qualities are perceived by sight. When we speak of the magnitude of objects, we generally mean the tangible magnitude, which is no more an object of sight than of hearing. For it is demonstrated in opticks, that a person indued with sight, but so fettered from his birth as to have no opportunity of gaining experience by touch, could never form any distinct notion of the distance, extension, magnitude, or figure of any thing. These are perceptions, not of sight, but of touch. We judge of them indeed from the visible appearance; but it is only in consequence of our having found, that certain changes in the visible appearance do always accompany, and intimate, certain changes in the tangible distance, magnitude, and figure. Visible magnitude, and tangible magnitude, are quite different things; the former changes with every change of distance, the latter is always the same; the one is perceived by one sense, the other by another. So that when you say, I see a tower two miles off, which appears no bigger than my thumb, and yet I believe it to be a thousand times bigger than my whole body; —your sensation is perfectly consistent with your belief: the contrariety is merely verbal: for the word *bigger*, in the first clause, refers to visible,

in the second, to tangible magnitude. There is here no more real inconsistency than if you were to say, I see a conical body of a white colour, and I believe it to have a sweet taste. If there be any difficulty in conceiving this, it must arise from our being more apt to confound the objects of sight and touch, than those of any other two senses. As the knowledge of tangible qualities is of more consequence to our happiness and preservation, than the knowledge of visible appearances, which in themselves can do neither good nor harm; we fix our principal attention on the tangible magnitude, the visible appearance serving only as a sign by which we judge of it: the mind makes an instantaneous transition from the visible appearance, which it overlooks, to the tangible quality, on which it fixeth its attention: and the sign is as little attended to, in comparison of the thing signified, as the shape of written characters, or the sound of articulate voices, in comparison of the ideas which the writer or speaker means to communicate.

But all men (it may be said) do not thus distinguish between visible and tangible magnitude. Many philosophers have affirmed, and the vulgar still believe, that magnitude is a sensation both of sight and touch: those people, therefore, when sensible of the diminished visible appearance of

the distant object, must suppose, that the perception they receive by sight of the magnitude of that object, is really a false perception; because different from what they should receive by touch, or even by sight, if the object were within three yards of their eyes. At any rate, they must suppose that what their sight perceives concerning magnitudes is not always to be depended on; and therefore that their sight is a fallacious faculty.

Let this objection have as much weight as you please; yet will it not prove, that the evidence of sense may be either confirmed or confuted by reason. Suppose then I perceive real magnitude, both by sight and touch. I observe, that what my sight perceives of magnitude is not always consistent, either with itself, or with the sensations received by touch from the same object. The same man, within the same hour, appears six feet high, and not one foot high, according as I view him at the distance of two yards or of two miles. What is to be done in this case? Both sensations I cannot believe; for that the man really changes his stature, is altogether incredible. I believe his stature to be always the same; and I find, that to my touch it always appears the same: and that, when I look at the man at the distance of a few feet, my visible perception of his magnitude coincides with my tangible per-

ception. I must therefore believe, that what my sight intimates concerning the magnitude of distant objects is not to be depended on. But whence arises this belief? Can I prove, by argument, that the man does not change his stature? that the sense, whose perceptions are all consistent, is a true, and not a fallacious faculty? or that a sense is not fallacious, when its perceptions coincide with the perceptions of another sense? No; I can prove none of these points. It is instinct, and not reason, that determines me to believe my touch: it is instinct and not reason that determines me to believe, that visible sensations, when consistent with tangible, are not fallacious; and it is either instinct, or reasoning founded on experience, (that is, on the evidence of sense), that determines me to believe the man's stature a permanent, and not a changeable thing. The evidence of sense is therefore decisive; from it there is no appeal to reason: and if I were to become sceptical in regard to it, I should believe neither the one sense nor the other; and of all experience, and experimental reasoning, I should become equally distrustful.

As the experience of an undiscerning or careless spectator may be confirmed, or corrected, by that of one who is more attentive, or more sagacious, so the evidence of an imperfect sense may

be corrected by that of another sense which we conceive to be more perfect. But the evidence of sense can never be corrected by any reasoning, except by that which proceeds on a supposition, that our senses are not fallacious. And all our notions concerning the perfection or imperfection of sense are either instinctive, and therefore principles of common sense; or founded in experience, and therefore ultimately resolvable into this maxim, That things are what our senses represent them.

Lucretius is much puzzled (as his master Epicurus had been before him) about the degree of credit due to our visible perceptions of magnitude. He observes, justly enough, that no principle can be confuted, except by another more evident principle; and, therefore, that the testimony of sense, than which nothing is more evident, cannot be confuted at all:* that the tes-

* See Diogenes Laertius, book 10. Lucretius de rerum natura, lib. 4. ver. 480. This author had sagacity enough to perceive the absurdity of Pyrrhonism, and to make several judicious remarks on the nature of evidence. But in applying these to his own theory, every one knows that he is by no means consistent. The poem of Lucretius is a melancholy spectacle; it is the picture of a great genius in the state of lunacy. Except when the whim of his sect comes across his imagin.-

timony of the nostrils concerning odour cannot be corrected or refuted by that of the eye, nor the eye by the ear, nor the ear by the touch, nor the touch by the taste; because each of these senses hath a set of objects peculiar to itself, of which the other senses cannot judge, because indeed they cannot perceive them. All this is very well; but there is one thing wanting, which I should think obvious enough, even to one of Epicurean principles. Of tastes we judge by the palate only; of smell, by the nostrils only; of sound, by the ears only; of colours, by the sight

tion, he argues with propriety, perspicuity, and elegance. Pathos of sentiment, sweetness of style, harmony of numbers, and a beauty, and sometimes a majesty, of description, not unworthy of Virgil, renders his poem highly amusing, in spite of its absurd philosophy. A talent for extensive observation he seems to have possessed in an extraordinary degree; but wherever the peculiar tenets of Epicureanism are concerned, he sees every thing through a false medium. So fatal is the admission of wrong principles. Persons of the most exalted understanding have as much need to guard against them, as those of the meanest capacity. If they are so imprudent, or so unfortunate, as to adopt them, their superiour genius, like the strength of a madman, will serve no other purpose than to involve them in greater difficulties, and give them the power of doing more mischief.

only; of hardness, softness, heat, cold, &c. by the touch only; but of magnitude we judge both by sight and touch. In regard to magnitude, we must therefore believe either our sight, or our touch, or both, or neither. To believe neither is impossible: if we believe both, we shall contradict ourselves: if we trust our sight, and not our touch, our belief at one time will be inconsistent with our belief at another; we shall think the same man six feet high, and not one foot high: we must therefore believe our touch, if we would exert any consistent belief in regard to magnitude.

2. But do we not, in physical experiments, acknowledge the deceitfulness of sense, when we have recourse to the telescope and microscope; and when, in order to analyse light, which, to our unassisted sight, appears one uniform uncompounded thing, we transmit the rays of it through a prism? I answer, this implies the *imperfection*, not the *deceitfulness*, of sense. For if I suppose my sight deceitful, I can no more trust it, when assisted by a telescope or microscope, than when unassisted. I cannot prove that things are as they appear to my unassisted sight; and I can as little prove, that things are as they appear to my sight assisted by glasses.

But is it not agreeable to common sense to

believe, that light is one uniform uncompounded thing? and if so, is not common sense in an errour? and what can rectify this errour but reasoning? I answer, it is undeniable, that light to the unassisted eye appears uncompounded and uniform. If from this I infer, that light is precisely what it appears to be, I form a wrong judgment, which I may afterwards rectify, upon the evidence of sense, when I see a ray of light transmitted through a prism. Here an errour of judgment, or a false inference of reason, is rectified by my trusting to the evidence of sense; to which evidence instinct or common sense determines me to trust.

But is it not common sense that leads me to form this wrong judgment? Do not all mankind naturally, and previously to all influence from education, judge in the same manner? Did not all philosophers before Newton, and do not all the unlearned to this day, believe that light is a simple fluid? I answer, common sense teacheth me, and all mankind, to trust to experience. Experience tells us, that our unassisted sight, though sufficiently acute for the ordinary purposes of life, is not acute enough to discern the minute texture of visible objects. If, notwithstanding, this experience, we believe, that the minute texture of light, or of any other visible substance, is

nothing different from that appearance which we perceive by the naked eye; then our belief contradicts our experience, and consequently is inconsistent with common sense.

But what if you have had no experience sufficient to convince you, that your senses are not acute enough to discern the texture of the minute parts of bodies?—Then it is certain, that I can never attain this conviction by mere reasoning. If a man were to reason *a priori* about the nature of light, he might chop logick till doomsday, before he convinced me, that light is compounded of rays of seven different colours. But if he tell me of experiments which he has made, or which he knows to have been made, this is quite another matter. I believe his testimony, and it makes up for my own want of experience. When I confide in his veracity, I conceive, and believe, that his senses communicated a true perception; and that, if I had been in his place, I should also have been convinced, by the evidence of my sense, that light is truly compounded of rays of seven different colours. But I must repeat, that a supposition of my senses being fallacious, would render me wholly inaccessible to conviction, both on the one side and on the other.

Suppose a man, on seeing the coloured rays

thrown off from the prism, should think the whole a delusion, and owing to the nature of the medium through which the light is transmitted, not to the nature of the light itself; and should tell me, that he could as easily believe my face, to be of a green colour, because it has that appearance when viewed through a pair of green spectacles, as that every ray of light consists of seven distinct colours, because it has that appearance when transmitted through a prism: would it be possible to get the better of this prejudice, without reasoning? I answer, it would not: but the reasoning used must all depend upon experiments; every one of which must be rejected, if the testimony of sense be not admitted as decisive. I could think of several expedients in the way of appeals to sense, by which it might be possible to reconcile him to the Newtonian theory of light; but, in the way of argument, I cannot devise a single one.

On an imperfect view of nature, false opinions may be formed: but these may be rectified by a more perfect view; or, which in many cases will amount to the same thing, by the testimony of of those who have obtained a more perfect view. The powers of man operate only within a certain sphere; and till an object be brought within that sphere, it is impossible for them to perceive it.

I see a small object, which I know to be a man, at the distance of half a mile: but cannot discern his complexion, whether it be black or fair; nor the colour of his clothes, whether it be brown, or black, or blue; nor his nose, whether it be long or short: I cannot even discern, whether he have any nose at all: and his whole body seems to be of one uniform black colour. Perhaps I am so foolish as to infer, that therefore the man has no nose: that his clothes are black, and his face of the colour of his clothes. On going up to him, I discover that he is a handsome man, of a fair complexion, dressed in blue. Surely it is not reasoning that sets me right in this instance; but it is a perfect view of an object that rectifies a wrong opinion formed upon an imperfect view.

I hear the sound of a musical instrument at a distance; but hear it so faintly, that I cannot determine whether it be that of a trumpet, a hautboy, a German flute, a French horn, or a common flute. I want to know from what instrument the sound proceeds; and I have no opportunity of knowing from the information of others. Shall I stand still where I am, and reason about it? No: that would make me no wiser. I go forward to the place from whence the sound seems to come: and by and by I can perceive, that the sound is different from that of a French horn and of a

trumpet: but as yet I cannot determine whether it be the sound of a hautboy or of a flute. I go on a little further, and now I plainly distinguish the sound of a flute; but perhaps I shall not be able to know whether it be a German or a common flute, except by means of my other senses, that is, by handling or looking at it.

It is needless to multiply instances for illustrating the difference between a perfect and an imperfect view of an object, and for showing, that the mind trusts to the former, but distrusts the latter. For obtaining a perfect view, (or perfect conception) we sometimes employ the same sense in a nearer situation; sometimes we make use of instruments, as ear trumpets, spectacles, microscopes, telescopes; sometimes we have recourse to the testimony of our other senses, or of the senses of other men: in a word, we rectify or ascertain the evidence of sense by the evidence of sense: but we never subject the evidence of sense to the cognisance of reason; for in sensations that are imperfect or indistinct, reasoning could never supply what is deficient, nor ascertain what is indefinite.

Our internal, as well as external senses, may be, and often are, imposed upon, by inaccurate views of their objects. We may in sincerity of heart applaud, and afterwards condemn, the same

person, for the same action, according to the different lights in which that action is presented to our moral faculty. Just now I hear a report, that a human body is found dead in the neighbouring fields, with marks of violence upon it. Here a confused suspicion arises in my mind of murder committed; but my conscience suspends its judgment till the true state of the case be better known: I am not as yet in a condition to perceive those qualities of this event which ascertain the morality of the action; no more than I can perceive the beauty or deformity of a face while it is veiled, or at too great a distance. A passenger informs me, that a person has been apprehended who confesses himself the murderer: my moral faculty instantly suggests, that this person has committed a crime worthy of a most severe and exemplary punishment. By and by I learn, from what I think good authority, that my former information is false, for that the man now dead had made an unprovoked assault on the other, who was thus driven to the necessity of killing him in self-defence: my conscience immediately acquits the manslayer. I send a messenger to make particular inquiry into this affair; who brings word, that the man was accidentally killed by a fowler shooting at a bird, who, before he fired had been at all possible

pains to discover whether any human creature was in the way; but that the deceased was in such a situation that he could not be discovered. I regret the accident; but I blame neither party. Afterwards I learn, that this fowler was a careless fellow, and, though he had no bad intention, was not at due pains to observe whether any human creature would be hurt by his firing. I blame his negligence with great severity; but I cannot charge him with guilt so enormous as that of murder. Here my moral faculty passes several different judgments on *the same action;* and each of them is right, and will be in its turn believed to be right, and trusted to accordingly, as long as the information which gave rise to it is believed to be true. I say, *the same action*, not *the same intention;* a different intention appears in the manslayer from each information; and it is only the intention and affections that the moral faculty condemns or approves. To discover the intention wherewith actions are performed, reasoning is often necessary: but the design of such reasoning, is not to sway or inform the conscience, but only to ascertain those circumstances or qualities of the action from which the intention of the agent may appear. When this becomes manifest, the conscience of mankind immediately and intuitively

declares it to be virtuous, or vitious, or innocent. These different judgments of the moral faculty are so far from proving it fallacious, that they prove the contrary: at least this faculty would be extremely fallacious, and absolutely useless, if, in the case now supposed, it did not form different judgments. While the intention of the agent is wholly unknown, an action is upon the same footing with regard to its morality, as a human face in regard to its beauty, while it is veiled, or at too great a distance. By removing the veil, or walking up to the object, we perceive its beauty and features; and by reasoning, or by information concerning the circumstances of the action, we are enabled to discover or infer the intention of the agent. The act of removing the veil, or of walking up to the object, has no effect on the eye; nor has the reasoning any effect on the conscience. While we view an object through an impure or unequal medium, through a pair of green spectacles, or an uneven pane of glass, we see it discoloured or distorted: just so, when misrepresented, a good action may seem evil, and an evil action good. If we be suspicious of the representation, if we be aware of the improper medium, we distrust the appearance accordingly; if not, we do and must believe it genuine. It is by reasoning from our experience of human actions and their causes, or by the tes-

timony of credible witnesses, that we detect misrepresentations concerning moral conduct; and it is also by the experience of our own senses, or by our belief in those who have had such experience, that we become sensible of inequalities or obscurities in the medium through which we contemplate visible objects. In either case the evidence of sense is admitted as finally decisive. A distempered sense, as well as an impure or unequal medium, may doubtless communicate false sensations; but we are never imposed upon by them in any thing material. A person in a fever may think honey bitter, and the smell of a rose offensive; but the delusion is of so short continuance, and of so singular a kind, that it can do no harm, either to him, or to the cause of truth. To a jaundiced eye, the whole creation may seem tinctured with yellow; but the patient's former experience, and his belief in the testimony of others, who assure him, that they perceive no alteration in the colour of bodies, and that the alteration he perceives is a common attendant on his disease, will sufficiently guard him against mistakes. If he were to distrust the evidence of sense, he could believe neither his own experience nor their testimony. He corrects, or at least becomes sensible of the false sensation, by means of sensations formerly received when he was in health; that

is, he corrects the evidence of an ill informed sense by that of a well informed sense, or by the declaration of those whose senses he believes to be better informed than his own. Still it is plain, that from the evidence of sense there can be no appeal to reason.

We conclude, therefore, that in natural philosophy, our sensations are not supposed deceitful, and that reasoning is not carried beyond the principles of common sense. And yet in this science full scope is given to impartial investigation. If, after the first experimental process, you suspect that the object may be set in a still fairer light, I know no law in logick, or in good sense, that can or ought to hinder you from making a new trial: but if this new trial turn to no account, if the object still appear the same, or if it appear less distinct than before, it were folly not to remain satisfied with the first trial. Newton transmitted one of the refracted primitive colours through a second prism, thinking it not impossible that this colour might resolve itself into others still more simple; but finding it remain unaltered, he was satisfied that the primitive colours are not compounded, but simple, and that the experimental process had been carried far enough. I take in my hand a perspective glass, whose tube may be lengthened and shortened at pleasure; and I am to find out, by my

own industry, that precise length at which the maker designed it should be used in looking at distant objects. I make several trials to no purpose: the distant object appears not at all, or but very confusedly. I hold one end of the perspective at my eye with one hand, and with the other I gradually shorten the tube, having first drawn it out to its greatest length. At first all is confusion; now I can discern the inequalities of the mountains in the horizon; now the object I am in quest of begins to appear; it becomes less and less confused; I see it distinctly. I continue to shorten the tube; the object loses it distinct appearance, and begins to relapse into its former obscurity. After many trials, I find, that my perspective exhibits no distinct appearance, except when it is of one particular length. Here then I fix; I have adjusted the glasses according to the intention of the maker: and I believe, that the distinct appearance is an accurate representation of the distant object, or at least more accurate than any of the confused appearances; of which I believe, that they come the nearer to truth the more they approach to distinctness, and that the most confused representations are the most false.

It was not by reasoning about the fallacy of the senses, and prosecuting a train of argument beyond the principles of common sense, that men discovered the true system of the world. In

the earlier ages, when they imagined the sun to be little bigger than the mountain beyond which he disappeared, it was absurd to think of the earth revolving round him. But in process of time, ingenious men, who applied themselves to the observation of the heavenly bodies, not with a view to confute popular errours, for they could not as yet even suspect the vulgar opinion to be erroneous, but merely to gratify their own laudable curiosity, began to conceive more exalted notions of the mundane system. They soon distinguished the planets from the fixed stars, by observing the former to be more variable in their appearances After a long succession of years, they came at last to understand the motions of the sun and moon so well, that to the utter astonishment of the vulgar, they began to calculate eclipses: a degree of knowledge they could not attain, without being convinced, that the sun and moon are very large bodies, placed at very great distances from the earth, the former much larger, and more remote, than the latter. Thus far it is impossible to show, that any reasoning had been employed by those ancient astronomers, either to prove, or to disprove, the evidence of the senses. On the contrary, they must all along have taken it for granted, that the senses are not fallacious; sup-

posing only, (what is certainly agreeable to common sense to suppose), that the experience of a diligent observer is more to be depended on than that of the inattentive multitude. As men grew more and more acquainted with the motions and appearances of the heavenly bodies, they became more and more sensible that the sun, earth, and planets, bear some very peculiar relation to one another: and having learned from the phenomena of eclipses, and some other natural appearances, that the sun is bigger than the earth,* they might, without absurdity, begin to suspect, that possibly the sun might be the centre round which the earth and other planets revolve; especially considering the magnificence of that glorious luminary, and the wonderful and delightful effects produced by the influence of his beams, while at the same time he seems

* Heraclitus maintained that the sun is but a foot broad; Anaxagoras, that he is much larger than the country of Peloponnesus; and Epicurus, that he is no bigger than he appears to the eye. But the astronomers of antiquity maintained, that he is bigger than the earth; eight times, according to the Egyptians; eighteen times, according to Eratosthenes; three hundred times, according to Cleomedes; one thousand and fifty times, according to Hipparchus; and fifty-nine thousand three hundred and nineteen times, according to Possidonius.

not to derive any advantage from the earth, or other planets. But if the matter had been carried no further, no reasoning from these circumstances could ever have amounted to a proof of the point in question, though it might breed a faint presumption in its favour. For still the evidence of sense seemed to contradict it; an evidence that nothing can disprove, but the evidence of sense placed in circumstances more favourable to accurate observation; and thus the point was brought to the test of common sense. And now, we not only know, that the Copernican theory is true, for every person who understands it is convinced of its truth; but we also know to what causes the universal belief of the contrary doctrine is to be ascribed. We know that men, considering the remote situation of our earth, and the imperfection of our senses, could not have judged otherwise than they did, till that imperfection was remedied, either by accuracy of observation, or by the invention of optical instruments. We speak not of revelation; which has indeed been vouchsafed to man for the regulation of his moral conduct; but which it would be presumption to expect, or desire, merely for the gratification of curiosity.

It is evident, from what has been said, that in natural philosophy, as well as in mathematicks, no

argumentation is prosecuted beyond self-evident principles; that as in the latter all reasoning terminates in intuition, so in the former all reasoning terminates in the evidence of sense. And as, in mathematicks, that is accounted an intuitive axiom, which is of itself so clear and evident, that it cannot be illustrated or enforçed by any medium of proof, and which must be believed, and is in fact believed, by all, on its own authority; so, in natural philosophy, that is accounted an ultimate principle, undeniable and unquestionable, which is supported by the evidence of a well informed sense, placed so as to perceive its object. In mathematicks, that is accounted false doctrine which is inconsistent with any self-evident principle; in natural philosophy, that is rejected which contradicts matter of fact, or, in other words, which is repugnant to the appearances of things as perceived by external sense.

Regulated by this criterion of truth, mathematicks and natural philosophy have become of all sciences the most respectable in point of certainty. Hence I am encouraged to hope, that if the same criterion were universally adopted in the philosophy of the mind, the science of human nature, instead of being, as at present, a chaos of uncertainty and contradiction, would acquire a considerable degree of certainty, perspicuity, and

order. If truth be at all attainable in this science, (and if it is not attainable, why should we trouble our heads about it?) surely it must be attained by the same means as in those other sciences.

I therefore would propose, "that in the philosophy of human nature, as well as in physicks "and mathematicks, principles be examined according to the standard of common sense, and "be admitted or rejected as they are found to "agree or disagree with it;" more explicitly, "that those doctrines be rejected which contradict matter of fact, that is, which are repugnant "to the appearance of things, as perceived by external and internal sense; and that those principles be accounted ultimate, undeniable, and "unquestionable, which are warranted by the "evidence of a well informed sense, placed in "circumstances favourable to a distinct perception of its object."

But what do you mean by a *well informed sense?* How shall I know, that any particular faculty of mine is not defective, depraved, or fallacious?—Perhaps it is not easy, at least it would furnish matter for too long a digression, to give a full answer to this question. Nor is it at present necessary; because it will appear in the sequel, that, however difficult it may be in some cases, to distinguish a first principle, yet there are

certain marks, by which those reasonings that tend to the subversion of a first principle, may be detected, at least in all cases of importance. However we shall offer a remark or two in answer to the question; which, though they should not appear perfectly unexceptionable, may yet throw light on the subject, and serve to prepare the mind of the reader for some things that are to follow.

First, then, if I wanted to certify myself concerning any particular sense or percipient faculty, that it is neither depraved nor defective, I should attend to the feelings or sensations communicated by it; and observe, whether they be clear and definite, and such as I am, of my own accord, disposed to confide in without hesitation, as true, genuine, and natural. If they are such, I should certainly act upon them till I had some positive reason to think them fallacious. Secondly, I consider whether the sensations received by this faculty be uniformly similar in similar circumstances. If they are not, I should suspect, either it is now depraved, or was formerly so; and if I had no other criterion to direct me, should be much at a loss to know whether I ought to trust the former or the latter experience; perhaps I should distrust both. If they are uniform, if my present and my past experience do exactly coincide, I

shall then be disposed to think them both right. Thirdly, I consider, whether, in acting upon the supposition that the faculty in question is well informed, I have ever been misled to my hurt or inconvenience; if not, then have I good reason to think, that I was not mistaken when I formed that supposition, and that this faculty is really what I supposed it to be. Fourthly, If the sensations communicated by this faculty be incompatible with one another, or irreconcileable to the perceptions of my other faculties, I should suspect a depravation of the former: for the laws of nature, as far as my experience goes, are consistent; and I am apt to believe that they are universally so. It is therefore a presumption, that my faculties are well informed, when the perceptions of one are quite consistent with those of the rest, and with one another. In a state of solitude I must satisfy myself with these *criteria;* but in society I have access to another criterion, which, in many cases will be reckoned more decisive than any of these, and which, in concurrence with these, will be sufficient to banish doubt from every rational mind. I compare my sensations and notions with those of other men; and if I find a perfect coincidence, I shall then be satisfied that my sensations are according to the

law of human nature, and therefore right. To illustrate all this by an example:

I want to know whether my sense of seeing be a well informed faculty. First, I have reason to think that it is; because my eyes communicate to me such sensations as I, of my own accord, am disposed to confide in. There is something, in my perceptions of sight so distinct, and so definite, that I do not find myself in the least disposed to doubt whether things be what my eyes represent them. Even the obscurer informations of this faculty carry along with them their own evidence, and my belief. I am confident, that the sun and moon are round, as they appear to be, that the rainbow is arched, that grass is green, snow white, and the heavens azure; and this I should have believed, though I had passed all my days in solitude, and never known any thing of other animals, or their senses. Secondly, I find that my notions of the visible qualities of bodies are the same now, they have always been. If this were not the case; if where I saw greenness yesterday I were to see yellow to day, I should be apt to suppose, that my sight had suffered some depravation, unless I had reason to think, that the object had really changed colour. But indeed we have so strong a tendency to believe our senses, that I doubt not but in such a case I

should be more disposed to suspect a change in the object than in my eyesight: much would depend on the circumstances of the case. We rub our eyes when we want to look at any thing with accuracy; for we know by experience, that motes, and cloudy specks, that may be removed by rubbing, do sometimes float in the eye, and hurt the sight. But if the alteration of the visible qualities in the external object be such as we have never experienced from a depravation of the organ, we should be inclined to trust our eyesight, rather than to suppose, that the external object has remained unaltered. Thirdly, No evil consequence has ever happened to me when acting upon the supposition, that my faculty of seeing is a well informed sense; whereas, if I were to act on the contrary supposition, I should soon have cause to regret my scepticism. I see a post in my way; by turning a little aside, I pass it unhurt: but if I had supposed my sight fallacious, and gone straight forward, a bloody nose, or something worse, might have been the consequence. If, when I bend my course obliquely, in order to avoid the post that seems to stand directly before me; I were to run my head full against it, I should instantly suspect a depravation in my eyesight: but as I never experience any misfortune of this kind, I believe that my sense of

seeing is a well informed faculty. Fourthly, The perceptions received by this sense are perfectly consistent with one another, and with the perceptions received by my other faculties. When I see the appearance of a solid body in my way, my touch always confirms the testimony of my sight; if it did not, I should suspect a fallacy in one or other of those senses, perhaps in both. When I look on a line of soldiers, they all seem standing perpendicular, as I myself stand; but if the men at the extremities of the line, without leaning against any thing, were to appear as if they formed an angle of forty-five degrees with the earth's surface, I should suspect some unaccountable obliquity in my vision. Lastly, After the experience of many years, after all the knowledge I have been able to gather, concerning the sensations of other men, from reading, discourse, and observation, I have no reason to think their sensations of sight different from mine. Every body who uses the English language, calls snow white, and grass green; and it would be in the highest degree absurd to suppose, that what they call the sensation of whiteness, is not the same sensation which I call by that name. Some few, perhaps, see differently from me. A man in the jaundice sees that rose yellow which I see red; a shortsighted man sees that picture con-

fusedly at the distance of three yards, which I see distinctly. But far the greater part of mankind see as I do, and differently from those few individuals; whose sense of seeing I therefore consider as less perfect than mine. Nay, though the generality of mankind were shortsighted, still it would be true, that we, who are not so, have the most perfect sight; for our sight is more accurate in its perceptions, qualifies us better for the business of life, and coincides more exactly, or more immediately, with the sensations received by the other senses. Yet the shortsighted, as well as they who have the acutest sight, trust to this sense, as soon as they are placed in a situation favourable to accurate observation: all the difference is, that it is more difficult, and often more inconvenient, for shortsighted persons to place themselves in such a situation. Still it should be remembered that a *perfect sense* and a *well informed sense* are not synonymous terms. We call a sense *well informed*, in opposition to one that is *depraved* or *fallacious*. *Perfection* and *imperfection* of sense are relative terms; implying a comparison, either between different men, in respect of the acuteness of their senses and faculties; or between any sense, as it appears in a particular man, and the degree of acuteness which is found to belong to that sense as it appears in the gen-

erality of mankind. There are two telescopes, one of which gives a distinct view of an object at two, and the other at four miles distance: both are equally *well informed*, (if I may so speak); that is, equally true in their representations; but the one is much more *imperfect* than the other.

I do not at present, offer any further illustrations of these *criteria* of a well informed sense. The reader, who examines them by the rules of common prudence, will perhaps be satisfied with them: at least I am apt to think, that few will suspect the veracity of their faculties when they stand this test. But let it not be supposed, that I mean to insinuate, that a man never trusts his faculties till he first examine them after this manner: we believe our senses previous to all reflection or examination; and we never disbelieve them, but upon the authority of our senses placed in circumstances more favourable to accurate observation.

If the reader is not satisfied with these *criteria*, it is no great matter. The question concerning a well informed sense it is not perhaps easy to answer. I offer these remarks rather as hints to be attended to by other adventurers in this part of science, than as a complete solution of the difficulty. If it were not that I presume some advantage may be derived from them in this way,

I should have omitted them altogether; for on them does not depend the doctrine I mean to establish.

SECTION III.

The subject continued. Intuitive Truths distinguishable into Classes.

Of the notions attending the perception of certain truth, we formerly mentioned this as one, "That in regard to such truth, we suppose we "should entertain the same sentiments and be- "lief if we were perfectly acquainted with all "nature."* Lest it should be thought that we mean to extend this notion too far, it seems proper to introduce here the following remarks.

1. The axioms and demonstrated conclusions of geometry are certainly true, and certainly agreeable to the nature of things. Thus we judge of them at present; and thus we necessarily believe, that we should judge of them, even if we were indued with omniscience and infallibility. It is a natural dictate of human understanding, that the contrary of these truths must for ever remain absurd and impossible; and that omnipo-

* See part 1. chap. 1.

tence itself cannot change their nature; though it might so deprave our judgment, as to make us disbelieve, or not perceive them.*

* Some authors are of opinion, that all mathematical truth is resolvable into identical propositions. The following remark to this purpose is taken from a dissertation on evidence, printed at Berlin, in the year 1761. "Omnes mathematicorum propositiones sunt identicæ, "et representantur hac formula, *a a*. Sunt veritates "identicæ, sub varia forma expressæ, imo ipsum, quod "dicitur, contradictionis principium, vario modo enun-"ciatum et involutum; siquidem omnes hujus generis "propositiones revera in eo continentur. Secundum "nostram autem intelligendi facultatem ea est propo-"sitionum differentia, quod quædam longa ratiocinie-"rum serie, alia autem breviori via, ad primum omni-"um principium reducantur, et in illud resolvantur. "Sic. v. g. propositio 2+2=4, statim huc cedit 1+1 "+1+1=1+1+1+1, i. e. idem est idem; et, pro-"prie loquendo, hoc modo enunciari debet. Si contin-"gat, adesse vel existere quatuor entia, tum existunt "quatuor entia; nam de existentia non agunt geometræ, "sed ea hypothetice tantum subintelligitur. Inde sum-"ma oritur certitudo ratiocinia perspicienti; observat "nempe idearum identitatem; et hæc est evidentia, as-"sensum immediate cogens, quam mathematicam aut "geometricam vocamus. Mathesi tamen sua natura pri-"va non est et propria. oritur etenim ex identitatis per-"ceptione, quæ locum habere potest, etiamsi ideæ non "repræsentent extensum." Of the connection of geometrical axioms with identical propositions, see Dr. Campbell's philosophy of rhetorick, book 1. chap. 5. sect. 1.

2. That my body exists, and is indued with a thinking, active, and permanent principle, which I call my soul; that the material world hath such an existence as the vulgar ascribe to it, that is, a real separate existence, to which its being perceived is in no wise necessary; that the men, beasts, houses, and mountains, we see and feel around us, are not imaginary, but real and material beings, and such, in respect of shape and tangible magnitude, as they appear to our senses; I am not only conscious that I believe, but also certain, that such is the nature of these things; and that, thus far at least, in regard to the nature of these things; an omniscient and infallible being cannot think me mistaken. Of these truths I am so certain, that I scruple not to pronounce every being in an errour who is of a contrary sentiment concerning them. For suppose an intelligent creature, an angel for instance, to believe that there are not in the universe any such things as this solar system, this earth, these mountains, houses, animals, this being whom I call myself; could I, by any effort, bring myself to believe, that his opinion is a true one, and implies a proposition expressive of something agreeable to the nature of things? It is impossible and inconceivable. My understanding intimates, that such an opinion would as certainly be false, as it is

false that two and two are equal to ten, or that things equal to one and the same thing are unequal to one another. Yet this is an opinion which omnipotence could render true, by annihilating the whole of this solar system; or make me admit as true, by depriving me of understanding. But so long as this solar system remains unannihilated, and my intellect undepraved, there is not a geometrical axiom more true, or more evident to me, than that this solar system, and all the objects above mentioned, do exist; there is not a geometrical axiom that has any better title to be accounted a principle of human knowledge; there is not a geometrical axiom against which it is more absurd, more unreasonable, more unphilosophical, to argue.

3. That snow is white, fire hot, gold yellow, and sugar sweet, we believe to be certainly true. These bodies affect our eyes, touch, and palate, in a peculiar manner; and we have no reason to think, that they affect the organs of different men in a different manner. The peculiar sensation we receive from them depends on three things; on the nature of the object perceived, on the nature of the organ of perception, and on the nature of the percipient being. Of each of these things the Deity could change the nature; and make sugar bitter, fire cold, snow black, and gold

green. But till this be done, in other words, while things continue as they are, it is as certainly true, that snow is white, fire hot, &c. as that two and two are equal to four, or a whole greater than a part. If we suppose, that snow, notwithstanding its appearance, is black, or not white, we must also suppose, that our senses and intellect are fallacious faculties; and therefore cannot admit any thing as true which has no better evidence than that of sense and intellect. If a creature of a different nature from man were to say, that snow is black, and hot, I should reply, (supposing him to use these words in the same sense in which I use them), It may possibly have that appearance to your senses, but it has not that appearance to mine: it may therefore, in regard to your faculties, be true; and if so, it ought to constitute a part of your philosophy: but of my philosophy it cannot constitute a part, because, in respect of my faculties, it is false, being contrary to my experience.* If the same being

* This does not imply, that the same thing may be both true and false; true in respect of one, and false in respect of another: and consequently, that truth is not something absolute and immutable, but variable and relative. I had remarked, that our sensations depend on three things, the nature of the object perceived, the nature of the organ of perception, and the nature of the

were to affirm, that a part is equal to a whole, I should answer, it is impossible; none can think so but those who are destitute of understanding. If he were to say, the solar system explained by Newton does not exist, I should answer, You are mistaken; if your knowledge were not imperfect, you would think otherwise; I am certain that it does exist.—We see, by thus stating the case, what is the difference between these three sorts of certainty. But still in respect to man, these three sorts are all equally evident, equally certain, and equally unsusceptible of confutation: and none of them can be disbelieved or doubted by us, except

* percipient. Consequently, an alteration in any one of these, though the other two remain unaltered, alters the sensation. The quality of the snow, therefore, the thing perceived, remaining the same, it may affect one kind of percipient being with one sort of sensation, and another kind with a sensation entirely different. A difference of sensation will also arise from the different states of the organ. A man who has one hand wrapt up in his bosom, and the other exposed to frosty air, will feel the same water cold with one hand, and warm with the other. Yet he does not believe that there is any change in the water; but he believes that the same temperature in it occasions both feelings. In like manner, we do not conceive any change to be made on the cloth, or even on the colour considered as a quality in the body, though in daylight it appear to us green, and in candlelight blue, and in every light to a person in the jaundice yellow.

we disavow the distinction between truth and falsehood, by supposing our faculties fallacious.

4. Of moral truth, we cannot bring ourselves to think that the Deity's notions (pardon the expression) are contrary to ours. If we believe him omniscient and infallible, can we also believe, that, in his sight, cruelty, injustice, and ingratitude, are worthy of reward and praise, and the opposite virtues of blame and punishment? It is absolutely impossible. The one belief destroys the other. Common sense declares, that a being possessed of perfect knowledge can no more entertain such a sentiment, than I with my eyes open can just now avoid seeing the light. If a created being were to think that virtue which we think vice, and that vice which we think virtue, what would be our notions of his intelligence? Should we not, without hesitation, pronounce him irrational, and his opinion an absurdity? The absurdity indeed is conceivable, and may be expressed in words that imply no contradiction: but that any being should think in this manner, and yet not think wrong, is to us as perfectly inconceivable, as that the same thing should be both true and false.*

* Locke says, that moral truth is susceptible of demonstration. If by this he means, that it admits of evidence sufficient to satisfy every rational mind, he is

We speak here of the great and leading principles of moral duty. Many subordinate duties there are, which result from the form of particular governments, and from particular modes of education; and there are some, which, though admirably adapted to the improvement of our nature, are yet so sublime, that the natural conscience of mankind, unassisted by revelation, can hardly be supposed capable of discovering them: but in regard to justice, gratitude, and those other virtues, of which no rational beings (so far as we know) are or can be ignorant, it is impossible for us to believe that our sentiments are wrong. I say, there are duties of which no rational beings can be ignorant: for if moral sentiments be the result of a bias, or *vis insita*, communicated to the rational soul by its Creator, then must

certainly in the right. But if by the word *demonstration* be meant, what geometricians mean by it, a proof that may be resolved into one or more self-evident axioms whose contrary is inconceivable, we confess that neither moral nor historical truth is susceptible of demonstration, nor many other truths of the most unquestionable certainty. However, it is not to be supposed, that Locke intended to use this word in any stricter sense than what is fixed by general practice; according to which, every proof that brings indubitable evidence to the reason or senses may properly be called a demonstration.

they be as universal as rational nature, and as permanent as the effects of any other natural law; and it is as absurd to argue against their truth or authenticity, as against the reality of any other matter of fact. But several authors of note have denied this inference, as well as the principle whence it proceeds; or at least, by calling the one in question, have endeavoured to make us sceptical in regard to the other. They have endeavoured to prove, that moral sentiment is different in different countries, and under different forms of religion, government, and manners; that therefore, in respect of it, there is no *vis insita* in the mind; for that, previous to education, we are in a state of perfect indifference as to virtue and vice; and that an opposite course of education would have made us think that virtue which we now think vice, and that vice, which we now think virtue: in a word, that moral sentiments are as much the effect of custom and human artifice, as our taste in dress, furniture, and the modes of conversation. In proof of this doctrine, a multitude of facts have been brought together, to show the prodigious diversity, and even contrariety, that takes place in the moral opinions of different ages, nations, and climates. Of all our modern sceptical notions, this seemed to me one of the most dangerous. For my own satisfaction, and

for the sake of those whom it is my duty to instruct, I have been at great pains to examine it; and the examination has turned out to my entire satisfaction. But the materials I have collected on this subject are far too bulky to be inserted here. The sceptical arguments are founded, not only on mistakes concerning the nature of virtue, but also on some historical facts misrepresented, and on others so equivocal, and bare of circumstances, that they really have no meaning. From the number of historical, as well as philosophical disquisitions, which I found it necessary to introduce, the *inquiry concerning the universality and immutability of moral truth*, which I thought to have comprised in a few pages, soon swelled into a treatise. I meant to have finished it some years ago; but have been prevented by a number of unforeseen accidents.

5. Of probable truth, a superiour being may think differently from us, and yet be in the right. For every proposition is either true or false; and every probable past event has either happened, or not happened; as every probable future event will either happen or not happen. From the imperfection of our faculties, and from the narrowness of our experience, we may judge wrong, when we think that a certain event has happened, or will happen: and a being of more extensive

experience, and more perfect understanding, may see that we judge wrong; for that the event in question never did happen, nor ever will. Yet it does not follow, that a man may either prudently or rationally distrust his probable notions as fallacious. That which man, by the constitution of his nature, is determined to admit as probable, he ought to admit as probable; for, in regard to man, that is probable truth. Not to admit it probable, when at the same time he must believe it to be so, is mere obstinacy: and not to believe that probable, which all other men, who have the same view of all the circumstances, believe probable, would be ascribed to caprice, or want of understanding. If one in such a case were refractory, we should naturally ask, How comes it that you think differently from us in this matter? Have you any reason to think us in a mistake? Is your knowledge of the circumstances from which we infer the probability of this event, different from ours? Do you know any thing about it of which we are ignorant? If he reply in the negative, and yet persist in contradicting our opinion, we should certainly think him an unreasonable man. Every thing, therefore, which to human creatures seems intuitively probable, is to be accounted one of the first principles of probable human knowledge. A human creature acts an irrational part when he ac-

gues against it; and if he refuse to acknowledge it probable, he cannot, without contradicting himself, acquiesce in any other human probability whatsoever.

It appears from what has been said, that there are various kinds of intuitive certainty; and that those who will not allow any truth to be self-evident, except what has all the characteristicks of a geometrical axiom, are much mistaken. From the view we have given of this subject, it would be easy to reduce these intuitive certainties into classes; but this is not necessary on the present occasion. We are here treating of the nature and immutability of truth as perceived by human faculties. Whatever intuitive proposition man, by the law of his nature, must believe as certain, or as probable, is, in regard to him, certain or probable truth; and must constitute a part of human knowledge, and remain unalterably the same, as long as the human constitution remains unaltered. And we must often repeat, that he who attempts to disprove such intuitive truth, or to make men sceptical in regard to it, acts a part, as inconsistent with sound reasoning, and as effectually subversive of human knowledge, as if he attempted to disprove truths which he knew to be agreeable to the eternal and necessary relations of things. Whether the Deity can or cannot change these truths into falsehoods, we need not seek to determine, because

it is of no consequence to us to know. It becomes us better to inquire, with humility and reverence, into what he has done, than vainly, and perhaps presumptuously, into what he can do. Whatever he has been pleased to establish in the universe, is as certainly established, as if it were in itself unchangeable and from eternity; and, while he wills it to remain what he made it, is as permanent as his own nature.

CHAPTER II.

The Preceding Theory rejected by Sceptical Writers.

WE have seen, that mathematicians and natural philosophers do, in effect, acknowledge the distinction between common sense and reason, as above explained; admitting the dictates of the former as ultimate principles, and never attempting either to prove or disprove them by reasoning. If we inquire a little into the genius of modern scepticism, we shall see, that, there, a very different plan of investigation has been adopted. This will best appear by instances taken from that pretended philosophy. But first let us offer a few general remarks.

SECTION I.

General Observations. Rise and Progress of Modern Scepticism.

1. THE Cartesian philosophy is to be considered as the groundwork of modern scepticism. The source of LOCKE's reasoning against the

separate existence of the secondary qualities of matter, of BERKELEY's reasoning against the existence of a material world, and of HUME's reasoning against the existence both of soul and body, may be found in the first part of the *Principia* of DES CARTES. Yet nothing seems to have been further from the intention of this worthy and most ingenious philosopher, than to give countenance to irreligion or licentiousness. He begins with doubting; but it is with a view to arrive at conviction: his successours (some of them at least) the further they advance in their systems, become more and more sceptical; and at length the reader is told, to his infinite pleasure and emolument, that the understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and leaves not the lowest degree of evidence in any proposition.*

The first thing a philosopher ought to do, according to DES CARTES, is to divest himself of all prejudices, and all his former opinions; to reject the evidence of sense, of intuition, and of mathematical demonstration; to suppose that there is no God, nor heaven, nor earth; and that man has neither hands nor feet, nor body; in a word, he is to doubt of every thing of which it is possible to doubt, and to be persuaded, that every

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 464.

thing is false which can possibly be conceived to be doubtful. Now there is only one point of which it is impossible to doubt, namely, That I, the person who doubts, am thinking. This proposition, therefore *I think*, and this only, may be taken for granted; and nothing else whatsoever is to be believed without proof.

What is to be expected from this strange introduction? One or other of these two things must necessarily follow. This author will either believe nothing at all; or if he believe any thing, it must be upon the recommendation of sophistical reasoning.* But DES CARTES is no sceptick in his moral reasonings: therefore, in his moral reasonings, he must be a sophister. Let us see, whether we can make good this charge against him by facts.

Taking it for granted that he thinks, he thence infers, that he exists: *Ego cogito, ergo sum:* I think; therefore I exist. Now there cannot be thought where there is no existence; before he take it for granted that he thinks, he must also take it for granted that he exists. This argument, therefore, proceeds on a supposition, that the thing to be proved is true; in other words, it is a sophism, a *petitio principii*. Even supposing it possible to con-

* See the first part of this essay.

ceive thinking, without at the same time conceiving existence, still this is no conclusive argument, except it could be shown, that it is more evident to a man that he thinks, than that he exists; for in every true proof a less evident proposition is inferred from one that is more evident. But, *I think*, and, *I exist*, are equally evident. Therefore this is no true proof. To set an example of false reasoning in the very foundation of a system, can hardly fail to have bad consequences.

Having in this manner established his own existence, our author next proceeds to prove the veracity of his faculties; that is, to show by reasoning, that what he thinks false is really false. He would have done better to have taken this also for granted: the argument by which he attempts to prove it, does more honour to his heart than to his understanding. It is indeed a sophism of the same kind with the former, in which he takes that for granted, which he meant to prove. It runs thus. We are conscious, that we have in our minds the idea of a being infinitely perfect, intelligent, and powerful, necessarily existent and eternal. This idea differs from all our other ideas in two respects: It implies the notions of eternal and necessary existence, and of infinite perfection; it neither is nor can be a fiction of the fancy;

and therefore exhibits no chimera or imaginary being, but a true and immutable nature, which must of necessity exist, because necessary existence is comprehended in the idea of it. Therefore there is a God, necessarily existent, infinitely wise, powerful and true, and possessed of all perfection. This being is the maker of us and of all our faculties; he cannot deceive, because he is infinitely perfect; therefore our faculties are true and not fallacious. * The same argument has been adopted by others, particularly by Dr. Barrow. "Cartesius," says that pious and learned author, "hath well observed, that, to make us "absolutely certain of our having attained the "truth, it is required to be known, whether our "faculties of apprehending and judging the truth "be true; which can only be known from the "power, goodness, and truth of our Creator." †

I object not to this argument for the divine existence, drawn from the idea of an all perfect being, of which the human mind is conscious: though perhaps this is not the most unexceptionable method of evincing that great truth. I allow, that when a man believes a God, he cannot, without absurdity and impiety, deny or ques-

* Cartesii Princip. Philos part 1. § 14. 15. 18.
† Lect. Geomet. 7.

tion the veracity of the human faculties; and that to acknowledge a distinction between truth and falsehood, implies a persuasion, that certain laws are established in the universe, on which the natures of all created things depend, which (to me at least) is incomprehensible, except on the supposition of a supreme, intelligent, directing cause. But I acquiesce in these principles, because I take the veracity of my faculties for granted; and this I feel myself necessitated to do, because I feel it to be the law of my nature, which I cannot possibly counteract. Proceeding then upon this innate and irresistible notion, that my faculties are true, I infer, by the justest reasoning, that God exists; and the evidence of this great truth is so clear and convincing, that I cannot withstand its force, if I believe any thing else whatever.

Des Cartes argues in a different manner. Because God exists, (says he), and is perfect, therefore my faculties are true. Right. But how do you know that God exists? I infer it from the second principle of my philosophy, already established *Cogito ergo sum*. How do you know that your inference is just? It satisfies my reason. Your argument proceeds on a supposition, that what satisfies your reason is true? It does. Do you not then take it for granted, that your reason

is not a fallacious, but a true faculty? This must be taken for granted, otherwise the argument is good for nothing. And if so, your argument proceeds on a supposition, that the point to be proved is true. In a word, you pretend to prove the truth of our faculties, by an argument which evidently and necessarily supposes their truth. Your philosophy is built on sophisms; how then can it be according to common sense?

As this philosopher doubted where he ought to have been confident, so he is often confident where he ought to doubt. He admits not his own existence, till he thinks he has proved it; yet his system is replete with hypotheses taken for granted, without proof, almost without examination. He sets out with the profession of universal scepticism; but many of his theories are founded in the most unphilosophical credulity Had he taken a little more for granted, he would have proved a great deal more: he takes almost nothing for granted, (I speak of what he professes, not of what he performs) and therefore he proves nothing. In geometry, however, he is rational and ingenious; there are some curious remarks in his discourse on the passions; his physicks are fanciful and plausible; his treatise on musick perspicuous, though superficial: a lively imagination seems to

have been his chief talent; want of knowledge in the grounds of evidence his principal defect.

We are informed by father MALEBRANCHE, that the senses were at first as honest faculties as one could desire to be indued with, till after they were debauched by original sin; an adventure, from which they contracted such an invincible propensity to cheating, that they are now continually lying in wait to deceive us. But there is in man, it seems, a certain clearsighted, stout, old faculty, called *reason*, which, without being deceived by appearances, keeps an eye upon the rogues, and often proves too cunning for them. MALEBRANCHE therefore adviseth us to doubt with all our might. "If a man has only learned "to doubt," says he, "let him not imagine that "he has made an inconsiderable progress."* Progress! in what? in science? Is it not a contradiction, or at least an inconsistency, in terms, to say that a man makes progress in science by doubting?† If one were to ask the way to Dublin, and to receive for answer, that he ought first of all to sit down; for that if he had only learned to

* Qu'on ne s'imagine pas, que l'on ait peu avancé, si on a seulement appris à douter.

La Recherche de la Verité, liv 1. *ch.* 20.

† Est contrarietas inter verba *scivi* et *dubia sunt*.

Des Cartes, Object. et Respons. septimæ

sit still, he might be assured, that he had made no inconsiderable progress in his journey; I suppose he would hardly trouble his informer with a second question.

It is true, this author makes a distinction between the doubts of passion, brutality, and blindness, and those of prudence, distrust, and penetration: the former, says he, are the doubts of academicks and atheists; the latter are the doubts of the true philosopher.* It is true also, that he allows us to give an entire consent to the things that appear entirely evident.† But he adopts, notwithstanding, the principles of DES CARTES' first philosophy, That we ought to begin our inquiries with universal doubt, taking only our own consciousness for granted, and thence inferring our existence, and the existence of God, and proving, from the divine veracity, that our faculties are not fallacious. Wherever it is possible that a deluding spirit may deceive us, there, says MALEBRANCHE, we ought to doubt:‡ but a deluding

* Recherche de la Verité, liv. 1. ch. 20. sect. iii.

† Qu'on ne doit jamais donner un consentement entier, qu' à des choses qui paroissent entierement evidentes. *Recherche de la Verité, liv. 1. ch. 20. sect. 3.* This is indeed a rational scepticism, such as Aristotle recommends, and every friend to truth must approve.

‡ Id. liv. 6. ch. 6

spirit may deceive us wherever our memory is employed in reasoning; therefore, in all such reasonings, there may be errour. And if so, there may be errour in reasoning of every kind; for without memory there can be no reasoning: but in the truths discovered by a single glance, (*connoissances de simple vue*,) such as this, That two and two make four, it is not possible, he says, for a deluding god, (*dieu trompeur*) however powerful, to deceive him. It is easy to see, that such doctrines must lead to sophistry, or to universal scepticism, or rather to both. For if a demonstrated conclusion may be false for any thing I know to the contrary, an axiom may be so too: my belief of the first is not less necessary, than my belief of the last. Intuition is, of all evidence, the clearest, and most immediately convincing; but demonstration produces absolute certainty, and full conviction, in the mind of him who understands it.* MALEBRANCHE, indeed, acknowledges, that we may reason when once we know that God is no deceiver: but this, he says, must be known at one glance, (that is, I suppose, intui-

* See the second chapter of the first book of the latter Analytics of Aristotle. The great philosopher holds, that intuition and demonstration are equally productive of knowledge; though the former be the first, the clearest, and most immediate evidence.

tively) or it cannot be known at all; for all reasoning on this subject may be fallacious.*

But I do not pretend to unfold all the false and sceptical principles of this author's philosophy To confess the truth, I do not well undersand it. He is generally mystical; often, if I mistake not, self-contradictory; and his genius is strangely warped by a veneration for the absurdities of popery. He rejects the evidence of sense, because it seems repugnant to his reason; he admits transubstantiation, though certainly repugnant both to reason and sense. Of Aristotle and Seneca, and the other ancient philosophers, he says, that their lights are nothing but thick darkness, and their most illustrious virtues, nothing but intolerable pride.† Fy, M. MALEBRANCHE! Popery, with all its absurdities, requires not from its adherents so illiberal a declaration. An Aristotelian, of your own religion and country, and nearly of your own age, delivers a very different doctrine: "Aristotle, supported by philosophy, "hath ascended by the steps of motion even to "the knowledge of one first mover, who is God. "In order to arrive at the knowledge of divine "things, we must learn science, otherwise we shall

* Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 6.
† Id. ib.

" fall into errour. Philosophy and theology bear " testimony to, and mutually confirm, each other, " and produce a more perfect knowledge of the " truth: the latter teaches what we ought to be- " lieve, and reason makes us believe it more " easily, and with greater steadiness. There are " two lights, which, by their union, yield a more " brilliant lustre than either of them could yield " singly, or both if separated. Moses learned the " philosophy of the Egyptians, and Daniel in " Babylon that of the Chaldeans."* This learned Peripatetick goes on to show, that Jerom, Augustin, Gregory of Nice, and Clemens Alexandrinus, entertained the same honourable opinion of the ancient philosophers. If Des Cartes, and his disciple Malebranche, had studied the ancients more, and indulged their own imagination less, they would have made a better figure in philosophy, and done much more service to mankind. But it was their aim to decry the ancients as much as possible: and ever since their time, it has been too much the fashion, to overlook the discoveries of former ages, as unnecessary to the improvement of the present. Malebranche often inveighs against Aristotle in par-

* Bonju. Introduction à la Philosophie, chap. 9. Paris 1614. folio.

ticular, with the most virulent bitterness; and affects, on all occasions, to treat him with supreme contempt.* Had this great ancient employed his genius in the subversion of virtue, or in establishing tenets incompatible with the principles of natural religion, he would have deserved the severest censure. But MALEBRANCHE lays nothing of this kind to his charge; he only finds him guilty of some speculative errours in natural philosophy. Aristotle was not exempted from that fallibility which is incident to human nature; yet it would not be amiss, if our modern wits would study him a little, before they venture to decide so positively on his abilities and character. It is observable, that he is most admired by those who best understand him. Now, the contrary is true of our modern scepticks: they are most admired by those who read them least, and who take their characters upon trust, as they find them delivered in coffeehouses and drawing-rooms, and other places of fashionable conversation, whose doctrines do so much honour to the virtue and good sense of this enlightened age.

I have sometimes heard the principles of the Socratick school urged as a precedent to justify

* See Recherche de la Verité, liv. 6. ch. 5

our modern scepticks. Modern scepticism is of two kinds, unlike in their nature, though the one be the foundation of the other. Des Cartes begins with universal doubt, that in the end he may arrive at conviction: Hume begins with hypothesis, and ends with universal doubt. Now, does not Aristotle propose, that all investigation should begin with doubt? And does not Socrates affirm, that he knows nothing certainly, except his own ignorance?

All this is true. Aristotle proposes, that investigation should begin with doubt.* He compares doubting to a knot, which it is the end of investigation to disintangle; and there can be no solution where there is no knot or difficulty to be solved. But Aristotle's doubt is quite of a different nature from that of Des Cartes. The former admits as true whatever is self-evident, without seeking to prove it: nay, he affirms, that those men who attempt to prove self-evident principles, or who think that such principles may be proved, are ignorant of the nature of proof.† It differs also most essentially from the scepticism of Mr. Hume. The reasonings of

* Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 3. cap. 1. Αὐτὸν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνασοῦντα τὸν δεσμον, &c.

† Aristot. Metaphys. lib. 4. cap. 4.

this author terminate in doubt; whereas Aristotle's constant aim is, to discover truth, and establish conviction. He defines philosophy *the science of truth;* divides it into speculative and practical; and expressly declares, that truth is the end of the former, and action of the latter.*

Cicero, in order to compliment a sect, of which, however, he was not a consistent disciple, ascribes to Socrates a very high degree of scepticism;† making his principles nearly the same with those of the new academy, who professed to believe, that all things are so involved in darkness, that nothing can be known with certainty. The only difference between them, according to Cicero in this place, is, that Socrates affirmed, that he knew nothing but his own ignorance: whereas Arcesilas, and the rest of the new academy, held, that man could know nothing, not even his own ignorance, with certainty; and therefore, that affirmation of every kind is absurd and unphilosophical. But we need not take this on the authority of Cicero; as we have access to the same original authors from whom he received his information. And if we consult them, particularly Xenophon,

* Ὀρθῶς δ' ἔχει καὶ τὸ καλεῖσαί τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην τῆς ἀληθείας, θεωρητικῆς μὲν γὰρ τέλος Ἀληθεία πρακτικῆς, δ' ἔργόν. *Metaphys. lib.* 2. *cap.* 1.

† Cic. Academ. lib. 1. cap. 12.

the most unexceptionable of them all in point of veracity, we shall find, that the reasonings, the sentiments, and the conduct of Socrates, are altogether incompatible with scepticism. The first science that engaged his attention was natural philosophy; which, as it was taught in those days by Zeno, Anaxagoras, and Xenophanes, had little to recommend it to a man of sense and candour. Socrates soon relinquished it from a persuasion that it was at once unprofitable, and founded in uncertainty: and employed the rest of his life in the cultivation of moral philosophy, a science which to him seemed more satisfactory in its evidence, and more useful in its application.* So far was he from being sceptical in regard to the principles of moral duty, that he inculcated them with earnestness wherever he found opportunity, and thought it incumbent on every man to make himself acquainted with them. In his reasonings, indeed, he did not formally lay down any principle, because it was his method to deduce his conclusions from what was acknowledged by his antagonist: but is this any proof, that he himself did not believe his own conclusions? Read the story of his life; his conduct never belied his principles: observe the manners of our scepticks;

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1. et lib. 4. cap. 7.

their conduct and principles do mutually and invariably belie one another. Do you seek still more convincing evidence, that Socrates felt, believed, and avowed the truth? Read the defence he made before his judges. See you there any signs of doubt, hesitation, or fear? any suspicion of the possibility of his being in the wrong? any dissimulation, sophistry, or art? See you not, on the contrary, the utmost plainness and simplicity, the calmest and most deliberate fortitude, and that noble assurance which so well becomes the cause of truth and virtue? Few men have shown so firm an attachment to truth, as to lay down their life for its sake: yet this did Socrates. He made no external profession of any philosophical creed; but in his death, and through the whole of his life, he showed the steadiest adherence to principle; and his principles were all consistent. Xenophon has recorded many of these; and tells us in regard to some of them, that Socrates scrupled not to call those men fools who differed from his opinion.* The sophists of his age were not solicitous to discover truth, but only to confute an adversary, and reason plausibly in behalf of their theories. That they might have the ampler field for this sort of speculation, they confined them-

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1. passim.

selves, like our modern metaphysicians, to general topicks, such as the nature of good, of beauty, and the like; on which one may say a great many things with little meaning, and offer a variety of arguments without one word of truth. Socrates did much to discredit this abuse of science. In his conversations he did not trouble himself with the niceties of artificial logick. His aim was, not to confute an adversary, nor to guard against that verbal confutation which the sophists were perpetually attempting; but to do good to those with whom he conversed, by laying their duty before them in a striking and persuasive manner.* He was not fond of reasoning on abstract subjects, especially when he had to do with a sophist; well knowing, that this could answer no other purpose than to furnish matter for endless and unprofitable logomachy. When, therefore, Aristippus asked him concerning the nature of good,† with a view to confute, or at least to tease him, with quibbling evasions, Socrates declined to answer in general terms; and desired the sophist to limit

* Ἀρίσιππον δὲ ἐπιχειροῦντος ἐλέγχειν τὸν Σωκράτη—βουλόμενος τὺς συνόντας ὠφελεῖν ὁ Σωκρατης ἀπεκρίνατο, ὥχ ὥσπερ οἱ τυλαττόμενοι, μη πη ὁ λογος ἐπαλλαχθῆ, ἀλλ' ὡς ἂν πεπεισμένοι μάλιστα πράττοιεν τὰ δέοντα

Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 3. *cap.* 8.

† Id. ibid.

his question, by confining the word *good* to some particular thing. Do you ask me, says he, what is good for a fever, for sore eyes, or for hunger? No, says the sophist. If, replies he, you ask me concerning the nature of a good which is good for no particular purpose, I tell you once for all, that I know of none such, and have no desires after it. In like manner, he answers to the general question concerning beauty, by desiring his adversary to confine himself to some particular kind of beauty. What would the great moralist have thought of those modern treatises, which seem to have nothing else in view, but to contrive vain definitions of general ideas? Simple, certain, and useful truth, was the constant, and the only, object of this philosopher's inquiry.

True it is, he sometimes said, that he knew nothing but his own ignorance. And surely the highest attainments in human knowledge are imperfect and unsatisfying. Yet man knows something: Socrates was conscious that he knew something; otherwise Xenophon would not have asserted, that his opinions concerning God, and providence, and religion, and moral duty, were well known to all the Athenians.* But Socrates was humble, and made no pretensions to any thing

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 1.

extraordinary, either in virtue or in knowledge. He professed no science; he instructed others, without pedantry, and without parade; exemplifying the beauty and the practicability of virtue, by the integrity of his life, and by the charms of an instructive, though most insinuating, conversation.* His address, in conducting an argument or inquiry, was very remarkable. He put on the appearance of an ignorant person, and seemed to be only asking questions for his information, when he was leading his disciple or antagonist to the acknowledgment of some useful truth. It is pity that this mode of instruction is not more generally practised. No other method conveys so clear conviction to the mind of the young student, or so effectually cultivates his understanding: for, by thus cooperating with the teacher in the investigation of truth his attention is fixed, his fancy directed, and his judgment exercised, no less than if the discovery were altogether his own.

Cicero seems to have been an Academick rather in name than in reality. And I am apt to think, from several passages in his works, † that

* Xenoph. Memorab. lib. 1. cap. 2.

† See particularly *De Officiis, lib.* 3. *cap.* 4. *De Fato, cap.* 2. *De Oratore, lib.* 3. *cap.* 21.

he made choice of this denomination, in order to have a pretence for reasoning on either side of every question, and consequently an ampler field for a display of his rhetorical talents.* To Pyrrho, Herillus, Aristo, and other scepticks, who, by asserting that all things are indifferent, destroy the distinction of virtue and vice, he will not allow even the name of philosopher: nay, he insinuates that it is impudence in such persons to pretend to it. † "I wish," says he in another place, "that "they who suppose me a sceptick were sufficiently "acquainted with my sentiments. For I am not "one of those whose mind wanders in errour, "without any fixed principle. For what sort of "understanding must that man possess, what "sort of life must that man lead, who, by divesting himself of principle, divests himself of the "means, both of reasoning and of living!"‡ Let it be observed also, that when the subject of his inquiry is of high importance, as in his books on

* See this point illustrated in REMARKS UPON A DISCOURSE OF FREETHINKING, &c. *By Philaleutherus Lipsiensis* (*Dr. Bentley*). Edit. 7. p. 262.

† De Officiis, lib. 1. cap. 2

‡ Quibus vellem satis cognita esset nostra sententia. Non enim sumus ii, quorum vagetur animus errore, nec habeat unquam quid sequatur. Quæ enim esset ista mens, vel quæ vita, potius, non modo disputandi, sed vivendi ratione sublata? *Cic. de Officiis, lib. 2. cap. 2.*

moral duties, and on the nature of the gods, he follows the doctrine of the dogmatists, particularly the Stoicks; and asserts his moral and religious principles with a warmth and energy which prove him to have been in earnest.

2. Nothing was further from the intention of Locke, than to encourage verbal controversy, or advance doctrines favourable to scepticism. To do good to mankind, by enforcing virtue, illustrating truth, and vindicating liberty, was his sincere purpose: and he did not labour in vain. His writings are to be reckoned among the few books that have been productive of real utility to mankind. But candour obliges me to remark, that some of his tenets seem to be too rashly admitted, for the sake of a favourite hypothesis. That some of them have promoted scepticism, is undeniable. He seems indeed to have been sensible, that there were inaccuracies in his work; and candidly owns, that "some hasty and "indigested thoughts on a subject never before "considered, gave the first entrance to his essay; "which, being begun by chance, was continued "by entreaty, written by incoherent parcels, and "after long intervals of neglect resumed again, "as humour or occasion permitted."*

The first book of his essay, which, with sub-

* Preface to the essay on human understanding.

mission, I think the worst, tends to establish this dangerous doctrine, That the human mind, previous to education and habit, is as susceptible of any one impression as of any other: a doctrine which, if true, would go near to prove, that truth and virtue are no better than human contrivances; or, at least, that they have nothing permanent in their nature, but may be as changeable as the inclinations and capacities of men; and that, as we understand the term, there is no such thing as common sense in the world. Surely this is not the doctrine that LOCKE meant to establish; but his zeal against innate ideas, and innate principles, put him off his guard, and made him allow too little to instinct, for fear of allowing to much. This controversy, as far as it regards moral sentiment, I propose to examine in another place. At present I would only observe, that if truth be any thing permanent, which it must be if it be any thing at all, those perceptions or impulses of understanding, by which we become conscious of it, must be equally permanent; which they could not be, if they depended on education, and if there were not a law of nature, independent on man, which determines the understanding in some cases to believe, in others to disbelieve. Is it possible to imagine, that any course of education could ever bring a rational creature to believe, that two and two are equal to three, that

he is not the same person to-day he was yesterday, that the ground he stands on does not exist? could make him disbelieve the testimony of his own senses, or that of other men? could make him expect unlike events in like circumstances? or that the course of nature, of which he has hitherto had experience, will be changed, even when he foresees no cause to hinder its continuance? I can no more believe, that education could produce such a depravity of judgment, than that education could make me see all human bodies in an inverted position, or hear with my nostrils, or take pleasure in burning or cutting my flesh. Why should not our judgments concerning truth be acknowledged to result from a bias impressed upon the mind by its Creator, as well as our desire of self-preservation, our love of society, our resentment of injury, our joy in the possession of good? If those judgments be not instinctive, I should be glad to know how they come to be universal: the modes of sentiment and behaviour produced by education are uniform only where education is uniform; but there are many truths which have obtained universal acknowledgment in all ages and nations. If those judgments be not instinctive, I should be glad to know how men find it so difficult, or rather impossible, to lay them aside: the false opinions we imbibe from habit and

education, may be, and often are, relinquished by those who make a proper use of their reason; and he who thus renounces former prejudices, upon conviction of their falsity, is applauded by all as a man of candour, sense, and spirit; but if one were to suffer himself to be argued out of his common sense, the whole world would pronounce him a fool.

The substance, or at least the foundation, of BERKELEY's argument against the existence of matter, may be found in LOCKE's essay, and in the *Principia* of DES CARTES. And if this argument be conclusive, it proves that to be false which every man must necessarily believe every moment of his life to be true, and that to be true which no man since the foundation of the world was ever capable of believing for a single moment. BERKELEY's doctrine attacks the most incontestable dictates of common sense; and pretends to demonstrate, that the clearest principles of human conviction, and those which have determined the judgment of all men in all ages, and by which the judgment of all rational men must be determined, are certainly fallacious.

Mr. HUME, more subtle, and less reserved, than any of his predecessors, hath gone still greater lengths in the demolition of common

sense; and reared in its place a most tremendous fabrick of doctrine; upon which, if it were not for the flimsiness of its materials, engines might easily be erected, sufficient to overturn all belief, science, religion, virtue, and society, from the very foundation. He calls this work, "A Treatise "of Human Nature; being an attempt to in- "troduce the experimental method of reasoning "into moral subjects" This is, in the style of Edmund Curl, a *taking title page;* but, alas! "fronti nulla fides!" The whole of this author's system is founded on a false hypothesis taken for granted; and whenever a fact contradictory to that false hypothesis occurs to his observation, he either denies it, or labours hard to explain it away. This, it seems, in his judgment, is experimental reasoning!

He begins his book with affirming, that all the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two classes, impressions, and ideas; that the latter are all copied from the former; and that an idea differs from its correspondent impression only in being a weaker perception. Thus, when I sit by the fire I have an impression of heat, and I can form an idea of heat when I am shivering with cold; in the one case I have a stronger perception of heat, in the other a weaker. Is there any warmth in this

idea of heat? There must, according to this doctrine; only the warmth of the idea is not quite so strong as that of the impression. For this author repeats it again and again, that "an "idea is by its nature weaker and fainter than "an impression, but is in every other respect "(not only similar but) the same."* Nay, he goes further, and says, that "whatever is true "of the one must be acknowledged concerning "the other;"† and he is so confident of the truth of this maxim, that he makes it one of the pillars of his philosophy. To those who may be inclined to admit this maxim on his authority, I would propose a few plain questions. Do you feel any, even the least warmth, in the idea of a bonfire, a burning mountain, or the general conflagration? Do you feel more real cold in Virgil's Scythian winter, than in Milton's description of the flames of hell? Do you acknowledge that to be true of the idea of eating, which is certainly true of the impression of it, that it alleviates hunger, fills the belly, and contributes to the support of human life? If you answer these questions in the negative, you deny one of the fundamental principles of this

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 131

† Idem p. 41.

philosophy. We have, it is true, a livelier perception of a friend when we see him, than when we think of him in his absence. But this is not all: every person of a sound mind knows, that in the one case we believe, and are certain, that the objects exists, and is present with us; in the other we believe, and are certain, that the object is not present: which, however, they must deny, who maintain, that an idea differs from an impression only in being weaker, and in no other respect whatsoever.

That every idea should be a copy and resemblance of the impression whence it is derived; that, for example, the idea of red should be a red idea; the idea of a roaring lion a roaring idea; the idea of an ass, a hairy, longeared, sluggish idea, patient of labour and much addicted to thistles; that the idea of extension should be extended, and that of solidity solid; that a thought of the mind should be indued with all, or any, of the qualities of matter, is, in my judgment, inconceivable and impossible. Yet our author takes it for granted; and it is another of his fundamental maxims. Such is the credulity of scepticism!

If every idea be an exact resemblance of its correspondent impression, (or object, for these terms, according to this author, seem to amount

to the same thing);* if the idea of extension be extended, as the same author allows;† then the idea of a line, the shortest that sense can perceive, must be equal in length to the line itself; for if shorter it would be imperceptible; and it will not be said, either that an imperceptible idea can be perceived, or that the idea of an imperceptible object can be formed: consequently the idea of a line a hundred times as long, must be a hundred times as long as the former idea; for if shorter, it would be the idea, not of this, but of some other shorter line. And so it clearly follows, nay it admits of demonstration, that the idea of an inch is really an inch long; and that of a mile, a mile long. In a word, every idea of any particular extension is equal in length to the extended object. The same reasoning holds good in regard to the other dimensions of breadth and thickness. All ideas, therefore, of solid objects, must be (according to this philosophy) equal in magnitude and solidity to the objects themselves. Now mark the consequence. I am just now in an apartment containing a thousand cubick feet, being ten feet square, and ten high; the door and windows

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 12. 13. 362.
† Idem p. 416. 417.

are shut, as well as my eyes and ears. Mr. Hume will allow that, in this situation, I may form ideas, not only of the visible appearance, but also of the real tangible magnitude of the whole house, of a first rate man of war, of St. Paul's cathedral, or even of a much larger object. But the solid magnitude of these ideas is equal to the solid magnitude of the objects from which they are copied: therefore I have now present with me an idea, that is, a solid extended thing, whose dimensions extend to a million of cubick feet at least. The question now is, where is this thing placed? for a place it must have, and a pretty large one too. I should answer, in my mind; for I know not where else the ideas of my mind can be so conveniently deposited. Now my mind is lodged in a body of no great dimensions, and my body is contained in a room ten feet square, and ten feet high. It seems then, that, into this room, I have it in my power at pleasure to introduce a solid object a thousand, or ten thousand times larger than the room itself. I contemplate it awhile, and then by another volition send it a packing, to make way for another object of equal or superiour magnitude. Nay, in no larger vehicle than a common postchaise, I can transport from one place to another, a building equal to the largest Egyptian

pyramid, and a mountain as big as the Peak of Teneriff. Take care, ye disciples of HUME, and be very well advised before ye reject this mystery as impossible and incomprehensible. It seems to be geometrically deduced from the principles, nay from the first principles of your master.

Say, ye candid and intelligent, what are we to expect from a logical and systematick treatise founded on a supposition that leads into such absurdity? Shall we expect truth? then, must it not be inferred by false reasoning? Shall we expect sound reasoning? then, must not the inferences be false? Indeed, though I cannot much admire this author's sagacity on the present occasion, I must confess myself not a little astonished at his courage. A witch going to sea in an eggshell, or preparing to take a trip through the air on a broomstick, would be a surprising phenomenon; but it is nothing to Mr. HUME, on such a bottom, "launching out "into the immense depths of philosophy."

To multiply examples for the confutation of so glaring an absurdity, is ridiculous. I therefore leave it to the reader to determine, whether, if this doctrine of solid and extended ideas be true, it will not follow, that the idea of a roaring lion must emit audible sound, almost as loud and as terrible, as the royal beast in per-

son could exhibit; that two ideal bottles of brandy will intoxicate as far at least as two genuine bottles of wine; and that I must be greatly hurt, if not dashed to pieces, if I am so imprudent as to form only the idea of a bomb bursting under my feet. For has not our author said, that "impressions and ideas comprehend all the perceptions (or objects) of the human mind; that "whatsoever is true of the one must be acknowledged concerning the other; nay, that they "are in every respect the same, except that the "former strike with more force than the latter?"

The absurdity and inconceivableness of the distinction between objects and perceptions, is another of our author's doctrines. "However "philosophers may distinguish (says he) betwixt the objects and perceptions of the senses; "this is a distinction which is not comprehended "by the generality of mankind."* Now how are

* See Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 353. 365. The word *perception*, (and the same is true of the words *sensation*, *smell*, *taste*, and many others) has, in common language, two, and sometimes three, distinct significations. It means, 1. The thing perceived. Thus we speak of the *taste* of a fig, the *smell* of a rose. 2. The power or faculty perceiving; as when we say, "I have "lost my *smell* by a severe cold, and therefore my *taste* "is not so quick as usual." 3. It sometimes denotes that

we to know, whether this distinction be conceived and acknowledged by the generality? If we put the question to any of them, we shall find it no easy matter to make ourselves understood, and, after all, perhaps be laughed at for our pains. Shall we reason *a priori* about their sentiments and comprehensions? This is neither philosophical nor fair. Will you allow me to reckon myself one of the generality? Then I declare, for my own part, that I do comprehend and acknowledge this distinction, and have done so ever since I was capable of reflection.

Suppose me to address the common people in

impulse or impression which is communicated to the mind by the external object operating upon it through the organ of sensation. Thus we speak of a *sweet* or *bitter taste*, a *distinct* or *confused*, a *clear* or *obscure*, *sensation* or *perception*. Most of our sceptical philosophers have either been ignorant of, or inattentive to, this distinction. MALEBRANCHE, indeed, (liv. 1. ch. 10.) seems to have had some notion of it; but either I do not understand this author, or there is a strange obscurity and want of precision in almost every thing he says. Mr. HUME's philosophy does not allow this to be a rational distinction; so that it is impossible to know precisely what he means by the word *perception* in this and many other places. But I have disproved his assertion, whatever sense (consistent with common use) we affix to the word.

these words: "I see a strange sight a little way "off; but my sight is weak, so that I see it im- "perfectly; let me go nearer, that I may have a "more distinct sight of it." If the generality of mankind be at all incapable of distinguishing between the object and the perception, this incapacity will doubtless discover itself most, when ambiguous words are used on purpose to confound their ideas; but if their ideas on this subject are not confounded even by ambiguous language, there is reason to think, that they are extremely clear, distinct, and accurate. Now I have here proposed a sentence, in which there is a studied ambiguity of language; and yet I maintain, that every person, who understands English, will instantly, on hearing these words, perceive, that by the word *sight* I mean, in the first clause, the thing seen; in the second, the power, or perhaps the organ, of seeing; in the third, the perception itself, as distinguished both from the percipient faculty, and from the visible object.*

* To every person of common understanding this distinction is in reality and practice quite familiar But as the words we use in expressing it are of ambiguous signification, it is not easy to write about it so as to be immediately understood by every reader. The thing seen or perceived is something permanent and external, and is believed to exist, whether perceived or not; the

If one of the multitude on hearing me pronounce this sentence, were to reply as follows: "The sight is not at all strange: it is a man on "horseback: but your sight must needs be weak,

faculty of seeing or perceiving is also something permanent in the mind, and is believed to exist, whether exerted or not; but what I here call *the perception itself* is temporary, and is conceived to have no existence but in the mind that perceives it, and to exist no longer than while it is perceived; for in being perceived, its very essence does consist; so that *to be*, and *to be perceived*, when predicated of it, do mean precisely the same thing. Thus, I just now see this paper, which I call the external object: I turn away, or shut my eyes, and then I see it no longer, but I still believe it to exist; though buried an hundred fathoms deep in the earth, or left in an uninhabitable island, its existence would be as real as if it were gazed at by ten thousand men. Again, when I shut my eyes, or tie a bandage over them, or go into a dark place, I see no longer; that is, my faculty of seeing acts, or is acted upon, no longer; but I still believe it to remain in my mind, ready to act, or to be acted upon, whenever it is again placed in the proper circumstances; for nobody supposes, that by shutting our eyes, or going into a dark place, we annihilate our faculty of seeing. But, thirdly, my *perception* of this paper is no permanent thing; nor has it any existence, but while it is perceived; nor does it at all exist, but in the mind that perceives it; I can put an end to, or annihilate it; whenever I please, by shutting my eyes; and I can at pleasure renew it again, by opening

" as you are lately recovered from sickness: " however, if you wait a little, till the man and " horse, which are now in the shade, come into " the sunshine, you will then have a much more " distinct sight of them:" I would ask, is the study of any part of philosophy necessary to make a man comprehend the meaning of these two sentences? Is there any thing absurd or unintelligible, either in the former or in the latter? Is there any thing in the reply, that seems to exceed the capacity of the vulgar, and supposes them to be more acute than they really are? If there be not, and I am certain there is not, here is an unquestionable proof, that the vulgar, and indeed all men whom metaphysick has not deprived of their senses, do distinguish between the object perceived, the faculty perceiving, and the perception or impulse communicated by the external object to the mind through the organ of sensation. What though all the three are sometimes expressed by the same name? This only shows, that accuracy of language is not always

them. It is really astonishing, that so many of our modern philosophers should have overlooked a distinction, which is of so great importance, that if we were unacquainted with it, a great part of human language would seem to be perfect nonsense.

necessary for answering the common purposes of life. If the ideas of the vulgar are sufficiently distinct, notwithstanding, what shall we say of that philosopher, whose ideas are really confounded by this inaccuracy, and who, because there is no difference in the signs, imagines that there is none in the things signified? That the understanding of such a philosopher is not a vulgar one, will be readily allowed; whether it exceeds, or falls short, let the reader determine.*

This author's method of investigation is no less extraordinary than his fundamental principles. There are many notions in the human mind, of which it is not easy perhaps to explain the origin. If you can describe in words what were the circumstances in which you received an impression of any particular notion, it is well; he will allow that you may form an idea of it. But if you cannot do this, then, says he, there is no such notion in your mind; for all perceptions are either impressions or ideas; and it is not possible for us so

* Mr. HUME does not seem to me to be always consistent with himself in affirming, that the vulgar do not comprehend the distinction between perceptions and objects. But, upon the whole, he seems to hold this distinction to be unreasonable, unphilosophical, and unsupported by the evidence of sense. See Treatise of Human Nature, p. 330—338.

much as to conceive any thing specifically different from ideas and impressions:* now all ideas are copied from impressions: therefore you can have no idea nor conception of any thing of which you have not received an impression. All mankind have a notion of power or energy. No, says he; an impression of power or energy was never received by any man; and therefore an idea of it can never be formed in the human mind. If you insist on your experience and consciousness of power, it is all a mistake: his hypothesis admits not the idea of power; and therefore there is no such idea.† All mankind have an idea of self. That I deny, says our author; I maintain, that no man ever had, or can have, an impression of self; and therefore no man can form any idea of it.‡ If you persist, and say, that certainly you have some notion or idea of yourself: My dear sir, he would say, you do not consider, that this assertion contradicts my hypothesis of impressions and ideas; how then is it possible it should be true!

But though the author deny, that I have any notion of *self*, surely he does not mean to affirm,

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 123.

† Idem p. 282.

‡ Idem p. 437. 438.

that I do not exist, or that I have no notion of myself as an existent being. In truth, it is not easy to say what he means on this subject. Most philosophical subjects become obscure in the hands of this author; for he has a notable talent at puzzling his readers and himself: but when he treats of consciousness, of personal identity, and of the nature of the soul, he expresses himself so strangely, that his words either have no meaning, or imply very great absurdity. "The "question," says he, "concerning the substance "of the soul is unintelligible."*—Well, sir, if yo think so, you may let it alone.—No; that must not be neither. "What we call a *mind*, is "nothing but a heap or collection of different "perceptions (or objects) united together by "certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, "to be endowed with perfect simplicity and "identity.†—If any one, upon serious and un- "prejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different "notion of himself, I must confess I can reason "with him no longer. All I can allow him is, "that he may be in the right as well as I, and "that we are essentially different in this particu- "lar. He may perhaps perceive something sim-

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 434. 435.
† Idem p. 361. 362.

"ple and continued, which he calls *himself;* "though I am certain there is no such principle "in me. But setting aside some metaphysicians "of this kind,"—that is, who feel and believe that they have a soul,—"I may venture to affirm "of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing "but a bundle or collection of different percep- "tions, which succeed each other with incon- "ceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and "movement.—There is properly no simplicity "in the mind at one time, nor identity in differ- "ent (times), whatever natural propension we "may have to imagine that simplicity and iden- "tity.—They are the successive perceptions only "that constitute the mind."*

If these words have any meaning, it is this: My soul (or rather that which I call my soul) is not one simple thing, nor is it the same thing to-day it was yesterday; nay, it is not the same this moment it was the last; it is nothing but a mass, collection, heap, or bundle, of different perceptions, or objects, that fleet away in succession, with inconceivable rapidity, perpetually changing, and perpetually in motion. There may be some metaphysicians, to whose souls this description cannot be applied; but I am certain, that this is

† Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 438. 439. 440

a true and complete description of my soul, and of the soul of every other individual of the human race, those few metaphysicians excepted.

That body has no existence, but as a bundle of perceptions, whose existence consists in their being perceived, our author all along maintains. He now affirms, that the soul, in like manner, is a bundle of perceptions, and nothing else. It follows, then, that there is nothing in the universe but impressions and ideas; all possible perceptions being by our author comprehended in those two classes. This philosophy admits of no other existence whatsoever, not even of a percipient being, to perceive these perceptions. So that we are now arrived at the height of human wisdom; at that intellectual eminence, from whence there is a full prospect of all that we can reasonably believe to exist, and of all that can possibly become the object of our knowledge. Alas! what is become of the magnificence of external nature, and the wonders of intellectual energy, the immortal beauties of truth and virtue, and the triumphs of a good conscience! Where now the warmth of benevolence, the fire of generosity, the exultations of hope, the tranquil ecstasy of devotion, and the pang of sympathetick delight! All, around, above, and beneath, is one vast vacuity, or rather an enormous chaos,

encompassed with darkness universally and eternally impenetrable. Body and spirit are annihilated; and there remains nothing (for we must again descend into metaphysick) but a vast collection, bundle, mass, or heap, of impressions and ideas.

Such, in regard to existence, seems to be the result of this theory of the understanding. And what is this result? If the author can prove, that there is a possibility of expressing it in words which do not imply a contradiction, I will not call it nonsense. If he can prove, that it is compatible with any one acknowledged truth in philosophy, in morality, in religion natural or revealed, I will not call it impious. If he can prove, that it does not arise *from common facts misrepresented*, and *common words misunderstood*, I shall admit that it may have arisen from accurate observation, candid and liberal inquiry, perfect knowledge of human nature, and the enlarged views of true philosophick genius.

SECTION II.

Of the Nonexistence of Matter.

In the preceding section I have taken a slight survey of the principles, and method of investigation, adopted by the most celebrated promoters of modern scepticism. And it appears that they have not attended to the distinction of reason and common sense, as explained in the first part of this essay, and as acknowledged by mathematicians and natural philosophers. Erroneous, absurd, and self-contradictory notions, have been the consequence. And now, by entering into a more particular detail, we might easily show, that many of those absurdities that disgrace the philosophy of human nature, would never have existed, if men had acknowledged and attended to this distinction; regulating their inquiries by the criterion above mentioned, and never prosecuting any chain of argument beyond self-evident principles. I shall confine myself to two instances; one of which is connected with the evidence of external sense, and the other with that of internal.

That matter or body has a real, separate, in-

dependent existence;* that there is a real sun above us, a real air around us, and a real earth under our feet, has been the belief of all men who were not mad, ever since the creation. This is believed, not because it is or can be proved by argument, but because the constitution of our nature is such that we must believe it. It is absurd, nay it is impossible to believe the contrary. I could as easily believe, that I do not exist, that two and two are equal to ten, that whatever is, is not; as that I have neither hands, nor feet, nor head, nor clothes, nor house, nor country, nor acquaintance; that the sun, moon, and stars, and ocean, and tempest, thunder, and lightning, mountains, rivers, and cities, have no existence but as ideas or thoughts in my mind, and, independent on me and my faculties, do not exist at all, and could not exist if I were to be annihilated; that fire, and burning, and pain, which I feel, and the recollection of pain that is past, and the idea of pain which I never felt, are all in the same sense ideas or perceptions in my mind,

* By *independent existence*, we mean an existence that does not depend on us, nor, so far as we know, on any being except the Creator. BERKELEY, and others, say, that matter exists not but in the minds that perceive it; and consequently depends, in respect of its existence, upon those minds.

and nothing else; that the qualities of matter are not qualities of matter, but affections of spirit; and that I have no evidence that any being exists in nature but myself. Philosophers may say what they please; and the world, who are apt enough to admire what is monstrous, may give them credit; but I affirm, that it is not in the power, either of wit or of madness, to contrive any conceit more absurd, or more nonsensical, than this, That the material world has no existence but in my mind.

Des Cartes admits, that every person must be persuaded of the existence of a material world: but he does not allow this point to be self-evident, or so certain as not to admit of doubt; because, says he, we find in experience, that our senses are sometimes in an errour, and because, in dreams we often mistake ideas for external things really existing. He therefore begins his philosophy of bodies with a formal proof of the existence of body.*

But however imperfect, and however fallacious, we acknowledge our senses to be in other matters, it is certain, that no man ever thought them fallacious in regard to the existence of body; nay, every man of a sound mind, is, by the law

* Cartesii Principia, part 1. § 4. part 2. § 1.

of his nature, convinced, that, in this respect at least, they are not, and cannot be mistaken. Men have sometimes been deceived by sophistical argument, because the human understanding is in some and indeed in many respects, fallible; but does it follow, that we cannot, without proof, be certain of any thing, not even of our own existence, nor of the truth of a geometrical axiom? Some diseases are so fatal to the mind, as to confound men's notions even of their own identity; but does it follow, that I cannot be certain of my being the same person to-day I was yesterday, and twenty years ago, till I have first proved this point by argument? And because we are sometimes deceived by our senses, does it therefore follow, that we never are certain of our not being deceived by them, till we have first convinced ourselves by reasoning, that they are not deceitful? If a Cartesian can prove, that there have been a few persons of sound understanding, who, from a conviction of the deceitfulness of their senses, have really disbelieved, or seriously doubted, the existence of a material world, I shall allow a conviction of this deceitfulness to be a sufficient ground for such doubt or disbelief, in one or a few instances: and if he can prove that such doubt, or disbelief has at any time been general among mankind, I shall allow

that it may be so again: but if it be certain, as I think it is, that no man of a sound mind, however suspicious of the veracity of his senses, ever did or could really disbelieve, or seriously doubt, the existence of a material world, then is this point self-evident, and a principle of common sense, even on a supposition that our senses are as deceitful as DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE choose to represent them. But we have formerly proved that our senses are never supposed to be deceitful, except when we are conscious, that our experience is partial, or our observation inaccurate; and that even then, the fallacy is detected, and rectified, only by the evidence of sense placed in circumstances more favourable to accurate observation. In regard to the *existence* of matter there cannot be a suspicion, that our observation is inaccurate, or our experience partial; and therefore it is not possible, that ever we should distrust our senses in this particular. If it were possible, our distrust could never be removed either by reasoning or by experience.

As to the suspicion against the existence of matter that is supposed to arise from our experience of the delusions of dreaming; we observe, in the first place, that if this be allowed a sufficient ground for suspecting, that our waking perceptions are equally delusive, there is at once an

end of all truth, reasoning, and common sense. That I am at present awake, and not asleep, I certainly know; but I cannot prove it: for there is no criterion for distinguishing dreaming fancies from waking perceptions, more evident than that I am now awake, which is the point in question; and, as we have often remarked, it is essential to every proof, to be more evident than that which is to be proved. That I am now awake, must therefore carry its own evidence along with it; if it be evident at all, it must be self-evident. And so it is: we may mistake dreams for realities, but no rational being ever mistook a reality for a dream. Had we the command of our understanding and memory in sleep, we should probably be sensible, that the appearances of our dreams are all delusive: which, in fact, is sometimes the case; at least I have sometimes been conscious, that my dream was a dream: and when it was disagreeable, have actually made efforts to awake myself, which have succeeded. But sleep has a wonderful power over all our faculties. Sometimes we seem to have lost our moral faculty; as when we dream of doing that, without scruple or remorse, which when awake we could not bear to think of. Sometimes memory is extinguished; as when we dream of conversing with our departed friends, without remembering any thing of their

death, though it was, perhaps, one of the most striking incidents we had ever experienced, and is seldom or never out of our thoughts when we are awake. Sometimes our understanding seems to have quite forsaken us; as when we dream of talking with a dead friend, remembering at the same time that he is dead, but without being conscious of any thing absurd or unusual in the circumstance of conversing with a dead man. Considering these and the other effects of sleep upon the mind, we need not be surprised, that it should cause us to mistake our own ideas for real things, and be affected with those in the same manner as with these. But the moment we awake, and recover the use of our faculties, we are sensible, that the dream was a delusion, and that the objects which now solicit our notice are real. To demand a reason for the implicit confidence we repose in our waking perceptions; or to desire us to prove, that things are as they appear to our waking senses, and not as they appear to us in sleep, is as unreasonable as to demand a reason for our belief in our own existence: in both cases our belief is necessary and unavoidable, the result of a law of nature, and what we cannot in practice contradict, but to our shame and perdition.

Further: if DES CARTES thought an argument necessary to convince him, that his perception of

the external world was not imaginary, but real, I would ask, how he could know that his argument was real, and not imaginary. How could he know that he was awake, and not asleep, when he wrote his principles of philosophy, if his waking thoughts did not, previous to all reasoning, carry along with them undeniable evidence of their reality? *I am awake*, is a principle which he must have taken for granted, even before he could satisfy himself of the truth of what he thought the first of all principles, *Cogito, ergo sum*. To which we may add, that if there be any persons in the world who never dream at all,* (and some such I think there are), and whose belief in the existence of a material world is not a whit stronger than that of those whose sleep is alway attended with dreaming; this is a proof from experience, that the delusions of sleep do not in the least affect our conviction of the authenticity of

* "I once knew a man," says Mr. LOCKE, "who was "bred a scholar, and had no bad memory, who told me, "that he had never dreamed in his life, till he had that "fever he was then newly recovered of, which was "about the five or six and twentieth year of his age. I "suppose the world affords more such instances."

Essay on Human Understanding, Book 2. *ch.* 1

A young gentleman of my acquaintance never dreams at all, except when his health is disordered.

the perceptions we receive, and of the faculties we exert, when we awake.

The first part of DES CARTES' argument for the existence of bodies, would prove the reality of the visionary ideas we perceive in dreams; for they, as well as bodies, present themselves to us, independent on our will. But the principal part of his argument is founded on the veracity of God, which he had before inferred from our consciousness of the idea of an infinitely perfect, independent, and necessarily existent being: Our senses inform us of the existence of body; they give us this information in consequence of a law established by the divine will: but God is no deceiver; therefore is their information true. I have formerly given my opinion of this argument, and shown that it is a sophism, as the author states it. We must believe our faculties to be true, before we can be convinced, either by proof, or by intuitive evidence. If we refuse to believe in our faculties, till their veracity be first ascertained by reasoning, we shall never believe in them at all.*

MALEBRANCHE † says, that men are more certain of the existence of God, than of the existence

* See the preceding section.

† Recherche de la Verité, tom. 3. p. 30. A Paris, chez Pralard, 1679.

of body. He allows, that DES CARTES has proved the existence of body, by the strongest arguments that reason alone could furnish; nay, he seems to acknowledge those arguments to be unexceptionable: * yet he does not admit, that they amount to a full demonstration of the existence of matter. In philosophy, says he, we ought to maintain our liberty as long as we can, and to believe nothing but what evidence compels us to believe. To be fully convinced of the existence of bodies, it is

* Mais quoique M. DES CARTES ait donné les preuves les plus fortes que la raison toute seule puisse fournir pour l'existence des corps; quoiqu'il soit evident, que Dieu n'est point trompeur, et qu'on puisse dire qu'il nous tromperoit effectivement, si nous nous trompions nous-mêmes en faisant l'usage que nous devons faire de nôtre esprit, et des autres facultez dont il est l'auteur; cependant on peut dire que l'existence de la matiere n'est point encore parfaitement demontrée. Car, enfin, en matiere de philosophie, nous ne devons croire quoique ce soit *que lorsque l'evidence nous y oblige.* Nous devons faire usage de nôtre libertè autant que nous le pouvons. Pour être plainement convaincus qu'il y a des corps, il faut qu'on nous demontre, non seulement qu'il y a un Dieu, et que Dieu n'est point trompeur, mais encore que Dieu nous a assuré qu'il en a effectivement cree: ce que je ne trouve point prouvé dans les ouvrages de M. DES CARTES.

Tom. 3. p. 37. 38. 39.

necessary that we have it demonstrated to us, not only that there is a God, and that he is no deceiver, but also that God hath assured us, that he has actually created such bodies; and this, he says, I do not find proved in the works of M. Des Cartes.

There are according to Malebranche, but two ways in which God speaks to the mind, and compels (or obliges) it to believe; to wit, by evidence, and by the faith. "The faith obliges us "to believe that bodies exist; but as to the evi- "dence of this truth, it certainly is not complete: "and it is also certain, that we are not invincibly "determined to believe, that any thing exists, "but God, and our own mind. It is true, that we "have an extreme propensity to believe, that we "are surrounded with corporeal beings; so far I "agree with M. Des Cartes: but this propen- "sity, natural as it is, doth not force our belief "by evidence: it only inclines us to believe by "impression. Now we ought not to be determi- "ned in our free judgments, by any thing but "light and evidence; if we suffer ourselves to be "guided by the sensible impression, we shall be "almost always mistaken." * Our author then

* Dieu ne parle à l'esprit, et ne l'oblige à croire qu'en deux manieres; par l'evidence, et par la foi. Je demeure

proposes in brief, the substance of that argument against the existence of body, which BERKELEY afterwards took such pains to illustrate; and discovers, upon the whole, that, as a point of philosophy, the existence of matter is a probability, to which we have it in our power either to assent, or not to assent, as we please. In a word, it is by the faith, and not by evidence, that we become certain of this truth.

This is not a proper place for analysing the passage above quoted, otherwise it would be easy to show, that the doctrine (such as it is) which

d'accord, que *la foi oblige a croire* qu'il y a des corps: mais pour l'evidence, il est certain, qu'elle n'est point entiere, et que nous ne sommes point invinciblement portez à croire qu'il y ait quelqu' autre chose que Dieu et nôtre esprit. Il est vray, que nous avons un penchant extréme à croire qu'il y a des corps qui nous environnent. Je l'accorde à M. DES CARTES: mais ce penchant, tout naturel qu'il est, *ne nous y force* point par evidence; il nous y incline seulement par impression. Or nous ne devons suivre dans nos jugemens libres que la lumiere et l'evidence; et si nous nous laissons conduire à l'impression sènsible, nous nous tromperons presque toujours. *Tom* 3. *p.* 39. *La foi* I translate *the faith*, because I suppose the author to mean the *christian* or *catholick faith*. If we take it to denote *faith* or *belief in general* I know not how we shall make any sense of the passage.

the author here delivers, is not reconcileable with other parts of his system. But I only mean to observe, that what is here asserted, of our belief in the existence of body being not necessary, but such as we may withhold if we please, is contrary to my experience. That my body, and this pen and paper, and the other corporeal objects around me, do really exist, is to me as evident, as that my soul exists; it is indeed so evident, that nothing is or can be more so; and though my life depended upon the consequence, I could not bring myself to entertain a doubt of it, even for a single moment.

I must therefore affirm, that the existence of matter can no more be disproved by argument, than the existence of myself, or than the truth of a self-evident axiom in geometry. To argue against it, is to set reason in opposition to common sense; which is indirectly to subvert the foundation of all just reasoning, and to call in question the distinction between truth and falsehood. We are told, however, that a great philosopher has actually demonstrated, *that matter does not exist*. Demonstrated! truly this is a piece of strange information. At this rate, any falsehood may be proved to be true, and any truth to be false. For it is impossible, that any truth should be more evident to me than this, *that matter does exist*.

Let us see, however, what BERKELEY has to say in behalf of this extraordinary doctrine. It is natural for demonstration, and for all sound reasoning, to produce conviction, or at least some degree of assent, in the person who attends to it, and understands it. I read *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, together with *The Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. The arguments, I confess, are subtle, and well adapted to the purpose of puzzling and confounding. Perhaps I will not undertake to confute them. Perhaps I am busy, or indolent, or unacquainted with the principles of this philosophy, or little versed in your metaphysical logick. But am I convinced, from this pretended demonstration, that matter has no existence but as an idea in the mind? Not in the least; my belief now is precisely the same as before. Is it unphilosophical, not to be convinced by arguments which I am not able to confute? Perhaps it may be, but I cannot help it: you may, if you please, strike me off the list of philosophers, as a nonconformist; you may call me unpliant, unreasonable, unfashionable, and a man with whom it is not worth while to argue: but till the frame of my nature be unhinged, and a new set of faculties given me, I cannot believe this strange doctrine, because it is perfectly incredible. But if I were permitted to propose one clownish question,

I would fain ask, Where is the harm of my continuing in my old opinion, and believing, with the rest of the world, that I am no the only created being in the universe, but that there are many others, whose existence is as independent on me, as mine is on them? Where is the harm of my believing, that if I were to fall down yonder precipice, and break my neck, I should be no more a man of this world? My neck, sir, may be an idea to you, but to me it is a reality, and an important one too. Where is the harm of my believing, that if in this severe weather, I were to neglect to throw (what you call) the idea of a coat over the ideas of my shoulders, the idea of cold would produce the idea of such pain and disorder as might possibly terminate in my real death? What great offence shall I commit against God or man, church or state, philosophy or common sense, if I continue to believe, that material food will nourish me, though the idea of it will not: that the real sun will warm and enlighten me, though the liveliest idea of him will do neither; and that, if I would obtain true peace of mind and self-approbation, I must not only form ideas of compassion, justice, and generosity, but also really exert those virtues in external performance? What harm is there in all this?—O! no harm at all, sir;—but—the truth,—the truth,—

will you shut your eyes against the truth?—No honest man ever will: convince me that your doctrine is true, and I will instantly embrace it.—Have I not convinced thee, thou obstinate, unaccountable, inexorable——; Answer my arguments, if thou canst.—Alas, sir, you have given me arguments in abundance, but you have not given me conviction, and if your arguments produce no conviction, they are worth nothing to me. They are like counterfeit bank bills; some of which are so dexterously forged, that neither your eye nor mine can detect them; yet a thousand of them would go for nothing at the bank; and even the papermaker would allow me more handsomely for old rags. You need not give yourself the trouble to tell me, that I ought to be convinced: I ought to be convinced only when I feel conviction: when I feel no conviction I ought not to be convinced. It has been observed of some doctrines and reasonings, that their extreme absurdity prevents their admitting a rational confutation. What! am I to believe such a doctrine? Am I to be convinced by such reasoning? Now, I never heard of any doctrine more scandalously absurd, than this of the nonexistence of matter. There is not a fiction in the *Persian Tales* that I could not as easily believe; the silliest conceit of the most contemptible superstition that ever disgraced human nature, is not more shocking to common

sense, nor more repugnant to every principle of human belief. And must I admit this jargon for truth, because I cannot confute the arguments of a man who is a more subtle disputant than I? Does philosophy require this of me? Then it must suppose, that truth is as variable as the fancies, the characters, and the intellectual abilities of men, and that there is no such thing in nature as common sense.

But all this, I shall perhaps be told, is but cavil and declamation. What if, after all, this very doctrine be believed, and the sophistry (as you call it) of BERKELEY be admitted as sound reasoning, and legitimate proof? What then becomes of your common sense, and your instinctive convictions?—What then, do you ask? Then indeed I acknowledge the fact to be very extraordinary; and I cannot help being in some pain about the consequences, which must be important and fatal. If a man, out of vanity, or from a desire of being in the fashion; or in order to pass for wonderfully wise, shall say, that BERKELEY's doctrine is true, while, at the same time his belief is precisely the same with mine, it is well; I leave him to enjoy the fruits of his hypocrisy, which will no doubt contribute mightily to his improvement in candour, happiness, and wisdom. If a man professing this doctrine,

act like other men in common affairs of life, I will not believe his profession to be sincere. For this doctrine, by removing body out of the universe, makes a total change in the circumstances of men; and therefore, if it is not merely verbal, must produce a total change in their conduct. When a man is only turned out of his house, or stripped of his clothes, or robbed of his money, he must change his behaviour, and act differently from other men, who enjoy those advantages. Persuade a man that he is a beggar and a vagabond and you shall instantly see him change his manners. If your arguments against the existence of matter have ever carried conviction along with them, they must at the same time have produced a much more extraordinary change of conduct; but if they have produced no change of conduct, I insist on it, they have never carried conviction along with them, whatever vehemence of protestation men may have used in avowing such conviction. If you say, that though a man's understanding be convinced, there are certain instincts in his nature that will not permit him to alter his conduct; or, if he did, the rest of the world would account him a madman; by the first apology, you allow the belief of the nonexistence of body to be inconsistent with the laws of nature; by the second, to be inconsistent with common sense.

But if a man be convinced, that matter has no existence, and believe this strange tenet as steadily, and with as little distrust, as I believe the contrary; he will, I am afraid, have but little reason to applaud himself on this new acquisition in science; he will soon find, it had been better for him to have reasoned, and believed, and acted, like the rest of the world. If he fall down a precipice, or be trampled under foot by horses, it will avail him little, that he once had the honour to be a disciple of Berkeley, and to believe that those dangerous objects are nothing but ideas in the mind. And yet, if such a man be seen to avoid a precipice, or to get out of the way of a coach and six horses at full speed, he acts as inconsistently with his belief, as if he ran away from the picture of an angry man, even while he believed it to be a picture. Supposing his life preserved by the care of friends, or by the strength of natural instinct urging him to act contrary to his belief; yet will this belief cost him dear, for if the plainest evidence, and fullest conviction, be certainly fallacious, I beg to be informed, what kind of evidence, and what degree of conviction, may reasonably be depended on. If nature be a juggler by trade, is it for us, poor purblind reptiles to attempt to penetrate the mysteries of her art, and take upon us to decide, when it is she presents a true, and when

a false appearance! I will not say, however, that this man runs a greater risk of universal scepticism, than of universal credulity. Either the one or the other, or both, must be his portion; and either the one or the other would be sufficient to imbitter my whole life, and to disqualify me for every duty of a rational creature. He who can believe against common sense, and against the clearest evidence, and against the fullest conviction, in any one case, may do the same in any other; consequently he may become the dupe of every wrangler who is more acute than he; and then, if he is entirely secluded from mankind, his liberty, and happiness, are gone for ever. Indeed a cheerful temper, strong habits of virtue, and the company of the wise and good, may still save him from perdition, if he have no temptations nor difficulties to encounter. But it is the end of every useful art, to teach us to surmount difficulties, not to disqualify us for attempting them. Men have been known to live many years in a warm chamber, after they were become too delicate to bear the open air; but who will say, that such a habit of body is desirable? What physician will recommend to the healthy such a regimen as would produce it?

But, that I may no longer suppose, what I maintain to be impossible, that mankind in ge-

neral, or even one rational being, could, by force of argument, be convinced, that this doctrine is true; what if all men were in one instant deprived of their understanding by almighty power, and made to believe, that matter has no existence but as an idea in the mind, all other earthly things remaining as they are? Doubtless this catastrophe would, according to our metaphysicians, throw a wonderful light on all the parts of knowledge. I pretend not even to guess at the number, extent, or quality, of astonishing discoveries that would then start forth into view. But of this I am certain, that, in less than a month after, there could not, without another miracle, be one human creature alive on the face of the earth.*

Berkeley foresaw, and has done what he could to obviate *some* of these objections. There are two points which he has taken great pains to prove. The first is, that his system differs

* This, I think, must follow, if we allow that our external senses are necessary to our preservation. And I do not see how that can be denied. A blind or deaf man may live not uncomfortably in the society of those who see or hear; but if all mankind were blind and deaf, or deprived of their reason so as to disbelieve their eyes and ears, and other percipient faculties, I know not how human life could be preserved without a miracle.

not from the belief of the rest of mankind; the second, that our conduct cannot be in the least affected by our disbelief of the existence of a material world.

1. As to the first, it is certainly false. Mr. HUME himself seems willing to give it up. I have known many who could not answer BERKELEY's arguments; I never knew one who believed his doctrine. I have mentioned it to some who were unacquainted with philosophy, and therefore could not be supposed to have any bias in favour of either system; they all treated it as most contemptible jargon, and what no man in his senses ever did or could believe. I have carefully attended to the effects produced by it upon my own mind; and it appears to me at this moment, as when I first heard it, incredible and incomprehensible: for though, by reading it over and over, I have got a set of phrases and arguments by heart, which would enable me, if I were so disposed, to talk, and argue, and write, "about it and about it;" yet, when I lay systems and syllogisms aside, when I enter on any part of the business of life, or when I refer the matter to the unbiassed decision of my own mind, I plainly see, that I had no distinct meaning to my words when I said, that the material world has no existence but in the mind that perceives it.

In a word, if this author had asserted, that I and all mankind acknowledge and believe the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment* to be a true history, I could not have had any better reason for contradicting that assertion, than I have for contradicting this, "that BERKELEY's principles in regard to the "existence of matter, differ not from the belief "of the rest of mankind."

2. In behalf of the second point he argues, "that nothing gives us an interest in the mate- "rial world, except the feelings pleasant or pain- "ful which accompany our perceptions; that "these perceptions are the same, whether we "believe the material world to exist or not to "exist; consequently, that our pleasant or pain- "ful feelings are also the same; and therefore, "that our conduct, which depends on our feel- "ings and perceptions, must be the same whe- "ther we believe or disbelieve the existence of "matter."

But if it be certain, that by the law of our nature we are unavoidably determined to believe that matter exists, and to act upon this belief, (and nothing, I think, is more certain), how can it be imagined, that a contrary belief would produce no alteration in our conduct and sentiments? Surely the laws of nature are not such trifles, as that it should be a matter of perfect indifference,

whether we act or think agreeably to them or not. I believe that matter exists; I must believe that matter exists; I must continually act upon this belief; such is the law of my constitution. Suppose my constitution changed in this respect, all other things remaining as they are; would there then be no change in my sentiments and conduct? If there would not, then is this law of nature, in the first place, useless, because men could do as well without it; secondly, inconvenient, because its end is to keep us ignorant of the truth; and, thirdly, absurd, because insufficient for answering its end, the bishop of Cloyne, and others, having, it seems, discovered the truth in spite of it. Is this according to the usual economy of nature? Does this language become her servants and interpreters? Is it possible to devise any sentiments or maxims more subversive of truth, and more repugnant to the spirit of true philosophy?

Further: All external objects have some qualities in common; but between an external object and an idea, or thought of the mind, there is not, there cannot possibly be, any resemblance. A grain of sand, and the globe of the earth; a burning coal, and a lump of ice; a drop of ink, and a sheet of white paper resemble each other, in being extended, solid, figured, coloured, and divi-

sible; but a thought or idea has no extension, solidity, figure, colour, nor divisibility: so that no two external objects can be so unlike, as an external object and (what philosophers call) the idea of it. Now we are taught by BERKELEY, that external objects (that is, the things we take for external objects) are nothing but ideas in our minds; in other words, that they are in every respect different from what they appear to be. This candle, it seems, hath not one of those qualities it appears to have: it is not white, nor luminous, nor round, nor divisible, nor extended; for to an idea of the mind, not one of these qualities can possibly belong. How then shall I know what it really is? From what it seems to be, I can conclude nothing; no more than a blind man, by handling a bit of black wax, can judge of the colour of snow, or the visible appearance of the starry heavens. The candle may be an Egyptian pyramid, the king of Prussia, a mad dog, or nothing at all: it may be the island of Madagascar, Saturn's ring, or one of the Pleiades, for any thing I know, or can ever know, to the contrary, except you allow me to judge of its nature from its appearance; which, however, I cannot reasonably do, if its appearance and nature are in every respect so different and unlike as not to have one single quality in common. I must therefore be-

lieve it to be, what it appears to be, a real, corporeal, external object, and so reject BERKELEY's system; or I never can, with any shadow of reason, believe any thing whatsoever concerning it. Will it yet be said, that the belief of this system cannot in the least affect our sentiments and conduct? With equal truth may it be said, that Newton's conduct and sentiments would not have been in the least affected by his being metamorphosed into an idiot, or a pillar of salt.

Some readers may perhaps be dissatisfied with this reasoning on account of the ambiguity of the words *external object* and *idea*, which however, the assertors of the nonexistence of matter have not as yet fully explained. Others may think that I must have misunderstood the author; for that he was too acute a logician to leave his system exposed to objections so decisive, and so obvious. To gratify such readers, I will not insist on these objections. That I may have misunderstood the author's doctrine, is not only possible, but highly probable; nay, I have reason to think, that it was not perfectly understood even by himself. For did not BERKELEY write his *principles of human knowledge*, with this express view, (which does him great honour), to banish scepticism both from science and from religion? Was he not sanguine in the hope of success? And has

not the event proved, that he was egregiously mistaken? For is it not evident, from the use to which other authors have applied it, that his system leads to atheism and universal scepticism? And if a machine disappoint its inventor so far as to produce effects contrary to those he wished, intended, and expected; may we not, without breach of charity, conclude, that he did not perfectly understand his plan? At any rate, it appears from this fact, that our author did not foresee all the objections to which his theory is liable He did not foresee, that it might be made the foundation of a sceptical system: if he had, we know he would have renounced it with abhorrence.

This one objection, therefore (in which I think I cannot be mistaken), will fully answer my present purpose: Our author's doctrine is contrary to common belief, and leads to universal scepticism. Suppose it, then, universally and seriously adopted; suppose all men divested of all belief, and consequently of all principle: would not the dissolution of society, and the destruction of mankind, necessarily ensue?

Still I shall be told that BERKELEY was a good man, and that his principles did him no hurt. I allow it; he was indeed a most excellent person; none can revere his memory more than I. But

does it appear, that he ever acted according to his principles, or that he thoroughly understood them? Does it appear, that if he had put them in practice, no hurt would have ensued to himself,* or to society? Does it appear, that he was a sceptick, or a friend to scepticism? Does it appear, that men may adopt his principles without danger of becoming scepticks? The contrary of all this appears with incontrovertible evidence.

Surely pride was not made for man. The most exalted genius may find in himself many affecting memorials of human frailty, and such as often render him an object of compassion to

* Let it not be pretended, that a man may disbelieve his senses without danger of inconvenience. Pyrrho (as we read in Diogenes Laertius) professed to disbelieve his senses, and to be in no apprehension from any of the objects that affected them. The appearance of a precipice or wild beast was nothing to Pyrrho; at least he said so: he would not avoid them; he knew they were nothing at all, or at least they were not what they seemed to be. Suppose him to have been in earnest; and suppose his keepers to have in earnest adopted the same principles: would not their limbs and lives have been in as great danger, as the limbs and life of a blind and deaf man wandering by himself in a solitary place, with his hands tied behind his back? I would as soon say, that our senses are useless faculties, as that we might disbelieve them without danger of inconvenience

those who in virtue and understanding are far inferiour. I pity BERKELEY's weakness in patronizing an absurd and dangerous theory; I doubt not but it may have overcast many of his days with a gloom, which neither the approbation of his conscience, nor the natural serenity of his temper, could entirely dissipate. And though I were to believe, that he was intoxicated with this theory, and rejoiced in it; yet still I should pity the intoxication as a weakness: for candour will not permit me to give it a harsher name; as I see in his other writings, and know by the testimony of his contemporaries, particularly Pope and Swift, that he was a friend to virtue, and to human nature.

We must not suppose a false doctrine harmless, merely because it has not been able to corrupt the heart of a good man. Nor, because a few scepticks have not authority to render science contemptible, nor power to overturn society, must we suppose, that therefore scepticism is not dangerous to science or mankind. The effects of a general scepticism would be dreadful and fatal. We must therefore, notwithstanding our reverence for the character of BERKELEY, be permitted to affirm, that we have sufficiently proved that his doctrine is subversive of man's

most important interests, as a moral, intelligent, and percipient being.

After all, though I were to grant, that the disbelief of the existence of matter could not produce any considerable change in our principles of action and reasoning, the reader will find in the sequel,* that the point I have chiefly in view would not be much affected even by that concession. I say not this as being diffident or sceptical in regard to what I have advanced on the present subject. Doctrines which I do not believe, I will never recommend to others. I am absolutely certain, that to me the belief of BERKELEY's system would be attended with the most fatal consequences; and that it would be equally dangerous to the rest of mankind, I cannot doubt, so long as I believe their nature and mine to be the same.

Though it be absurd to attempt a proof of what is self-evident, it is manly and meritorious to confute the objections that sophistry may urge against it. This, with respect to the subject in question, has been done, in a decisive and masterly manner, by the learned and sagacious Dr. Reid;† who proves that the reasonings of BERKE-

* Part ii. chap. 3.

† Inquiry into the human mind on the principles of common sense.

LEY, and others, concerning primary and secondary qualities,* owe all their strength to the ambiguity of words. I have proved, that, though this fundamental errour had never been detected, the philosophy of BERKELEY, is in its own nature absurd, because it supposes the original principles of common sense controvertible and fallacious: a supposition repugnant to the genius of true philosophy; and which leads to

* DES CARTES, LOCKE, and BERKELEY, suppose, that what we call *a body* is nothing but a collection of qualities; and these they divide into *primary* and *secondary* Of the former kind are magnitude, extension, solidity, &c. which LOCKE and the CARTESIANS allow to belong to bodies at all times, whether perceived or not. Of the latter kind are the *heat* of fire, the *smell* and *taste* of a rose, &c. and these, by the same authors, and by BERKELEY, are said to exist, not in the bodies themselves, but only in the mind that perceives them: an errour they are led into by supposing, that the words *heat, taste, smell*, &c. signify nothing but *a perception;* whereas we have formerly shown, that they also signify *an external thing.* BERKELY, following the hints which he found in DES CARTES, MALEBRANCHE and LOCKE, has applied the same mode of reasoning to prove, that primary, as well as secondary qualities, have no external existence; and consequently, that body (which consists of these two classes of qualities, and nothing else) exists only as an idea in the mind that perceives it, and exists no longer than while it is perceived.

universal credulity, or universal scepticism; and, consequently, to the subversion of all knowledge and virtue.

It is proper, before we proceed to the next instance, to make a remark or two on what has been said.

1. Here we have an instance of a doctrine advanced by some philosophers, in direct contradiction to the general belief of all men in all ages.

2. The reasoning by which it is supported, though long accounted unanswerable, did never produce a serious and steady conviction. Common sense still declared the doctrine to be false; we were sorry to find the powers of human reason so limited, as not to afford a logical confutation of it; we were convinced it merited confutation, and flattered ourselves, that one time or other it would be confuted.

3. The real and general belief of this doctrine would be attended with fatal consequences to science, and to human nature; for this is a doctrine according to which a man could not act nor reason in the common affairs of life, without incurring the charge of insanity or folly, and involving himself in distress and perdition.

4. An ingenious man, from a sense of the bad tendency of this doctrine, applies himself

to examine the principles on which it is founded; discovers them to be erroneous; and proves to the full conviction of competent judges, that from beginning to end it is all a mystery of falsehood, arising from the use of ambiguous words, and from the gratuitous admission of principles which never could have been admitted if they had been thoroughly understood.

SECTION III.

Of Liberty and Necessity.

The second instance to which I purpose to apply the principles of this discourse by showing the danger of carrying any investigation beyond the dictates of common sense, is no other than the celebrated question concerning liberty and necessity; a question on which many things have been said, and some things, I presume, to little purpose. To enter into all the particulars of this controversy, is foreign to my present design; and I would not wish to add to a dispute already too bulky. My intention is, to treat the doctrine of necessity as I treated that of the non-existence of matter; by inquiring, whether the one be not, as well as the other, contrary to common sense, and therefore absurd.

1. That certain intentions and actions are in themselves, and previous to all consideration of their consequences, good, laudable, and meritorious; and that other actions and intentions are bad, blamable, and worthy of punishment, has been felt and acknowledged by all reasonable creatures in all ages and nations. We need not wonder at the universality of this sentiment: it is as natural to the human constitution, as the faculties of hearing, seeing, and memory; it is as clear, unequivocal, and affecting, as any intimation from any sense external or internal.

2. That we cannot do some things, but have it in our power to do others, is what no man in his senses will hesitate to affirm. I can take up my staff from the ground, but I cannot lift a stone of a thousand weight. On a common, I may walk southward or northward, eastward, or westward; but I cannot ascend to the clouds, nor sink downward to the centre of the earth. Just now I have power to think of an absent friend, of the Peak of Teneriff, of a passage in Homer, or of the death of Charles I. When a man asks me a question, I have it in my power to answer or be silent, to answer softly or roughly, in terms of respect or in terms of contempt. Frequent temptations to vice fall in my way; I may yield, or I may resist: if I resist, I applaud myself, because I am conscious it was in my power to do otherwise; if I

yield, I am filled with shame and remorse, for having neglected to do what I might have done and ought to have done. My liberty in these instances I cannot prove by argument; but there is not a truth in geometry of which I am more certain.

Is not this doctrine sufficiently obvious? Must I quote Epictetus, or any other ancient author, to prove that men were of the same opinion in former times? No idea occurs more frequently in my reading and conversation, than that of *power* or *agency;* and I think I understand my own meaning as well when I speak of it as when I speak of any thing else. But this idea has had the misfortune to come under the examination of a certain author, who, according to custom, has found means so to darken and disfigure it, that, till we have cleared it of his misrepresentations, we cannot proceed any further in the present subject. And we are the more inclined to digress on this occasion, because he has made his theory of power the ground of some atheistical inferences, which we should not scruple at any time to step out of our way to overturn. Perhaps these frequent digressions are offensive to the reader: they are equally so to the writer. To remove rubbish is neither an elegant nor a pleasant work, but it is often necessary. It is peculiarly necessary in the philosophy of human nature.

The road to moral truth has been left in such a plight by some modern projectors, that a man of honesty and plain sense must either, with great labour and loss of time, delve his way through, or be swallowed up in a quagmire. The metaphysician advances more easily. His levity, perhaps, enables him, like Camilla in Virgil, to skim along the surface without sinking; or perhaps, the extreme subtlety of his genius can, like Satan in Paradise Lost, penetrate this chaos, without being much incumbered or retarded in his progress. But men of ordinary talents have not those advantages, and must therefore be allowed to flounce along, though with no very graceful motion, the best way they can.

All ideas, according to Mr. HUME's fundamental hypothesis, are derived from and represent impressions: But we have never any impression that contains any power or efficacy: We never, therefore, have any idea of power.* In proof of the minor proposition of this syllogism, he remarks, that "when we think we perceive our "mind acting on matter, or one piece of matter "acting upon another, we do in fact, perceive "only two objects or events contiguous and suc- "cessive, the second of which is always found in

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 282

" experience to follow the first; but that we never " perceive, either by external sense, or by consci- " ousness, that power, energy, or efficacy, which " connects the one event with the other. By ob- " serving that the two events do always accom- " pany each other, the imagination acquires a ha- " bit of going readily from the first to the second, " and from the second to the first; and hence we " are led to conceive a kind of necessary connec- " tion between them. But in fact there is neither " necessity nor power in the objects we consider, " but only in the mind that considers them; and " even in the mind, this power of necessity is " nothing but a determination of the fancy, acqui- " red by habit, to pass from the idea of an object " to that of its usual attendant."* So that what we call the efficacy of a cause to produce an effect, is neither in the cause nor in the effect, but only in the imagination, which has contracted a habit of passing from the object called the cause, to the object called the effect, and thus associating them together. Has the fire a power to melt lead? No; but the fancy is determined by habit to pass from the idea of fire to that of melted lead, on account of our having always perceived them

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 272. 300.

contiguous and successive;—and this is the whole matter. Have I a power to move my arm? No; the volition that precedes the motion of my arm has no connection with that motion; but the motion having been always observed to follow the volition, comes to be associated with it in the fancy; and what we call the power, or necessary connection, has nothing to do, either with the volition, or with the motion, but is merely a determination of my fancy, or your fancy, or any body's fancy, to associate the idea or impression of my volition with the impression or idea of the motion of my arm. I am sorry I cannot express myself more clearly; but I should not do justice to my author, if I did not imitate his language on the present occasion: plain words will never do, when one has an unintelligible doctrine to support.

What shall we say to this collection of strange phrases? or what name shall we give it? Shall we call it a most ingenious discovery, illustrated by a most ingenious argument? This would be complimenting the author at a very great expense; for this would imply, not only that he is the wisest of mortal men, but also that he is the only individual of that species of animals who is not a fool. Certain it is, that all men have in all ages talked, and argued, and acted, from a per-

suasion that they had a very distinct notion of power. If our author can prove, that they had no such notion, he can also prove that all human discourse is nonsense, all human actions absurdity, and all human compositions (his own not excepted) words without meaning. The boldness of his theory will, however, pass with many, for a proof of its being ingenious. Be it so, gentlemen, I dispute not about epithets; if you will have it, that genius consisteth in the art of putting words together so as to form absurd propositions, I have nothing more to say. Others will admire this doctrine, because the words by which the author means to illustrate and prove it, if printed on a good paper and with an elegant type, would of themselves make a pretty sizeable volume. It were pity to deprive these people of the pleasure of admiring; otherwise I might tell them, that nothing is more easy than this method of composition; for that I would undertake, at a very short warning, (if it could be done innocently, and without prejudice to my health), to write as many pages, with equal appearance of reason and argument, and with equal advantage to philosophy and mankind, in vindication of any given absurdity; provided only, that (like the absurdity in question) it were expressed in words of which one at least is ambiguous.

In truth, I am so little disposed to admire this extraordinary paradox, that nothing could make me believe its author to have been in earnest, if I had not found him drawing inferences from it too serious to be jested with by any person who is not absolutely distracted. It is one of Mr. HUME's maxims, "that we can never have "reason to believe, that any object, or quality of "an object, exists, of which we cannot form an "idea." * But, according to this astonishing theory of power, and causation, "we have *no idea* "of power, nor of a being endowed with any "power, MUCH LESS of one endowed with infinite "power." † The inference is but too glaring; and though our author does not plainly and avowedly express it, he once and again puts his reader in mind, that this inference, or something very like it, is deducible from his theory; ‡ for which, no doubt, every friend to truth, virtue, and human nature, is infinitely obliged to him!

But what do you say in opposition to my theory? You affect to treat it with a contempt which hardly becomes you, and which my philosophy has not met with from your betters! Pray let us hear your arguments. And do you, sir, really

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 302.

† Idem. p. 432.

‡ Idem. p. 284. 291. &c.

think it incumbent on me to prove by argument, that I, and all other men, have a notion of power; and that the efficacy of a cause (of fire, for instance, to melt lead) is in the cause, and not in my mind? Would you think it incumbent on me to confute you with arguments, if you were pleased to affirm, that all men have tails and cloven feet; and that it was I who produced the earthquake that destroyed Lisbon, the plague that depopulates Constantinople, the heat that scorches the wilds of Africa, and the cold that freezes the Hyperborean ocean? Truly, sir, I have not the face to undertake a direct confutation of what I do not understand; and I am so far from comprehending this part of your system, that I will venture to pronounce it perfectly unintelligible. I know there are some who say they understand it; but I also know, that there are some who speak, and read, and write too with very little expense of thought.

These are all but evasions, you exclaim; and insist on my coming to the point. Never fear, sir; I am too deeply interested in some of the consequences of this theory of yours, to put you off with evasions. To come therefore to the point, I shall first state your doctrine in your own words, that there may be no risk of misrepresentation; and then, if I should not be able *directly* to prove it false, (for the reason already given), I shall

demonstrate, *indirectly* at least, or by the apagogical method, that it is not, and cannot be true.

"As the necessity," says our author, "which "makes two times two equal to four, or three "angles of a triangle equal to two right ones, "lies only in the act of the understanding, by "which we consider and compare these ideas;* "in like manner, the necessity or power which "unites causes and effects, lies in the determi- "nation of the mind to pass from the one to the "other. The efficacy, or energy, of causes is nei- "ther placed in the causes themselves, nor in "the Deity, nor in the concurrence of these two "principles; but belongs entirely to the soul, "which considers the union of two or more ob- "jects in all past instances It is here that the "real power of causes is placed, along with their "connection and necessity."*

To find that his principles lead to atheism, would stagger an ordinary philosopher, and make

* What! is it an act of my understanding that makes two and two equal to four! Was it not so before I was born, and would it not be so though all intelligence were to cease throughout the universe! But it is idle to spend time in confuting what every child who has learned the very first elements of science, knows to be absurd.

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 291.

him suspect his fundamental hypothesis, and all his subsequent reasonings. But the author now quoted is not apt to be staggered by considerations of this kind. On the contrary, he is so intoxicated with his discovery, that, however sceptical in other points, he seems willing to admit this as one certain conclusion.*

If a man can reconcile himself to atheism, which is the greatest of all absurdities, I fear I shall hardly put him out of conceit with his doc-

* Speaking of it, in another place, he says, "A conclusion which is somewhat extraordinary, but which "seems founded on sufficient evidence. Nor will its evidence be weakened by any general diffidence of the "understanding, or sceptical suspicion, concerning every conclusion which is new and extraordinary. No "conclusions can be more agreeable to scepticism than "such as make discoveries concerning the weakness "and narrow limits of human reason and capacity."

Hume's Essays, vol. 2 p. 87. edit. 1767.

I know not what discoveries this conclusion may lead others to make concerning our author's reason and capacity; but I have some ground to think, that in him it has not wrought any extraordinary self-abasement; otherwise he would not have asserted, with so much confidence, what he acknowledges to be a *most violent paradox*, and what indeed is contrary to the experience and conviction of every person of common sense. See *Treatise of Human Nature, vol.* 1. *p.* 291. 299.

trine, when I show him, that other less enormous absurdities are implied in it. We may make the trial however. Gentlemen are sometimes pleased to entertain unaccountable prejudices against their Maker; who yet, in other matters, where neither fashion nor hypothesis interferes, condescend to acknowledge, that the good old distinction between truth and falsehood is not altogether without foundation.

On the supposition that we have no idea of power or energy, and that the preceding theory of causation is just, our author gives the following definition of a cause; which seems to be fairly deduced from his theory, and which he says is the best that he can give. "A cause is an ob-"ject precedent and contiguous to another, and so "united with it, that the idea of the one deter-"mines the mind to form the idea of the other, "and the impression of the one to form a more "lively idea of the other." * There are now in

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 298. This is not the only definition of a cause which Mr. HUME has given. But his other definitions are all, in my opinion, inadequate; being all founded on the same absurd theory. My business, however, at present is, not to criticise Mr. HUME's definitions, but to confute (if I can) his licentious doctrines. These will be allowed to be absurd, if they be found to lead to absurd consequences. So Mr

my view two contiguous houses, one of which was built last summer, and the other two years ago. By seeing them constantly together for several months, I find, that the idea of the one determines my mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other. So that, according to our author's definition, the one house is the cause, and the other the effect! Again, day and night have always been contiguous and successive; the imagination naturally runs from the idea or impression of the one to the idea of the other: consequently, according to the same profound theory and definition, either day is the cause of night, or night the cause of day, just as we consider the one or the other to have been originally prior in time; that is, in other words, light is either the

HUME himself, in another place, very justly determines, "when any opinion leads into absurdities, it is certainly "false." *Essay on Liberty and Necessity, part* 2. The definition of a cause, here quoted, is a consequence drawn by Mr. HUME himself (and in my opinion fairly drawn) from his theory of power and causation. By proving that consequence to be absurd, I prove (according to Mr. HUME's own rules of logick) the absurdity of the opinion that leads to it. This is all that I mean by quoting it; and this I presume is enough. A doctrine is sufficiently confuted, if it be shown to lead into *one absurdity*.

cause or the effect of darkness; and its being the one or the other depends entirely on my imagination! Let those admire this discovery who understand it.

Causation * implies more than priority and contiguity of the cause to the effect. This relation cannot be conceived at all, without a supposition of power or energy in the cause. † Let the reader recollect two things that stand related as cause and effect; let him contemplate them with a view to this relation; then let him conceive the cause divested of all power; and he must at the same instant conceive, that it is a cause no longer; for a cause divested of power, is divested of that by which it is a cause. If a man, after examining his notion of causation in this manner, is conscious that he has an idea of power, then I say he has that idea. If all men, in all ages, have used the word *power*, or something synonymous to it, and if all men know what they mean when they speak of power, I maintain, that all men have a notion, conception, or idea of power, in whatever way they came by it: and I also main-

* *Causation* denotes *the relation of cause and effect.*

† Non sic causa intelligi debet, ut quod cuique antecedat id ei causa sit, sed quod cuique *efficienter* antecedat.

Cicero De Fato, cap. 15.

tain, that no true philosopher ever denied the existence or reality of any thing, merely because he could not give an account of its origin, or because the opinion commonly received concerning its origin did not happen to quadrate with its system.

When, therefore, our author says, that the efficacy or energy of causes is not placed in the causes themselves, he says neither less nor more than this, that what is essential to a cause is not in a cause; or, in other words,—that a cause is not a cause. Are there any persons who, upon the authority of this theorist, have rashly adopted atheistical principles? I believe there are such. Ye dupes of unmeaning words and incomprehensible arguments, behold on what a champion ye have placed your confidence! All the comfort I can give you is, that if it be possible for the same thing at the same time to be and not to be, you may possibly be in the right.

It follows from what has been said, that we cannot admit this theory of power and causation, without admitting, at the same time, the grossest and most impious absurdities. Is this a sufficient confutation of it? I think it is. If any person think otherwise, I take a shorter method, and utterly deny all the premises from which this strange conclusion is supposed to result. I deny the doc-

trine of impressions and ideas, as the author has explained it; nay, I have already affirmed, and proved, it to be not only false, but unintelligible. And I maintain, that though it could be shown, that all simple ideas are derived from impressions, or intimations of sense, it is true, notwithstanding, that all men have an idea of power. They get it by experience, that is, by intimations of sense, both external and internal. Their mind acting upon their body gives them this notion or idea; their body acting on other bodies, and acted on by other bodies, gives them the same idea; which is also suggested by all the effects and changes they see produced in the universe. So thoroughly are we acquainted with it, that we can, in cases innumerable, determine, with the utmost accuracy and certainty, the degree of power necessary to produce a given effect.

I repeat therefore, that some things are in our power and others are not; and that we perfectly understand our own meaning when we say so. That the reader may not lose any chain in our reasoning, he will please to look back to the second and third paragraphs of this section.

3. By attending to my own internal feelings, and to the evidence given by other men of theirs, I am sensible, that I deserve reward or punishment for those actions only which are in my own

power. I am no more accountable for the evil which I can neither prevent nor remedy, than for the destruction of Troy, or the plagues of Egypt; and for the good which happens by my means, but against my will, I no more deserve reward or praise, than if I were a piece of inanimate matter.

This is the doctrine of common sense; and this doctrine has in all ages been supported by some of the most powerful principles of our nature; by principles which, in the common affairs of life, no man dares suppose to be equivocal or fallacious. A man may as well tell me that I am blind, or deaf, or that I feel no heat when I approach the fire, as that I have not a natural sentiment disposing me to blame intentional injury, and to praise intentional beneficence; and which makes me feel and be conscious, that the evil I am compelled to do is not criminal, and that the good I perform against my will is not meritorious. That other men are conscious of the same sentiment, I know with as much certainty as I can know any thing of what passes in the minds of other men; for I have daily and hourly opportunities of making observations in regard to this very point. The greatest part of conversation turns upon the morality of human actions; and I never yet heard any person seriously blamed or ap-

plauded, by a reasonable creature, for an action in the performance of which he was not considered as a free agent.* The most rigid predestinarians suppose freedom of will to be in one way or other consistent with eternal and unconditional decrees: if they cannot explain in what way, they call it a mystery; it surpasses their understanding; but it must be so; for otherwise the morality of actions is altogether inconceivable.†

* Si omnia fato fiunt, omnia fiunt causa antecedente; et, si appetitus, illa etiam quæ appetitum sequuntur: ergo, etiam assensiones. At si causa appetitus non est sita in nobis, ne ipse quidem appetitus est in nostra potestate. Quod si ita est, ne illa quidem quæ appetitu efficiuntur sunt sita in nobis. Non sunt igitur, neque assensiones, neque actiones, in nostra potestate: *ex quo efficitur, ut nec laudationes justæ sint, nec vituperationes, nec honores, nec supplicia.* Quod cum vitiosum sit, probabiliter concludi putant, non omnia fato fieri quæcunque fiant.

Cicero, de Fato, cap. 17.

† The reader, I hope, does not think me such a novice in reasoning, as to urge the judgment of the council of Trent in behalf of any doctrine, philosophical or religious. Yet every fact in logick and morality is worth our notice, if we would establish those sciences on their only firm foundation, the universal consent and practice of mankind. It deserves, therefore, to be remarked, that, at the reformation, this consciousness of freewill was acknowledged, both by the Lutherans, and by the church of Rome, to be a principle of common sense,

Do the interests of science, or of virtue, suffer by this representation of the matter? I think not.

But some philosophers, not satisfied with this view of it, are for bringing the sentiment of moral liberty to the test of reason. They want to prove by argument, either that I have, or that I have not, such a feeling: or, if I shall be found to have it, they want to know whether it be fallacious or not. In other words, they want to prove,

which was to be ascertained not by reasoning, but by experimental proof. So says a most judicious and elegant historian, whose words are remarkably apposite to the present subject, and to the manner in which we treat it. Speaking of some articles said to be maintained by the Lutherans, in opposition to freewill, the historian informs us, that, in the judgment of many of that celebrated council, the opinion implied in these articles, "E empia, e biasfema contra Dio. Ch'era una pazzia "*contra il senso comune, esperimentando ogni huomo la* "*propria libertà, che non merita contestatione, ma comme* "*Aristotele dice, o castigo, o prova esperimentale.* Che i "medisimi discepoli di Luthero s'erano accorti della "pazzia; e, moderando l'assordità, dissero poi, esservi "libertà nell huomo in quello, che tocca le attioni le "attioni esterne politiche ed economiche, e quanto ad "ogni giustitia civile; *le quali e sciocco chi non conosce ve-*" *nir dal conseglio ed ellettione;* restringendosi a negar la "liberta quanto alla sola giustitia divina."

Istoria del Concili Trid. di P. Sarpi, lib. 2. p. 214. edit. 4.

or to disprove, what I know by instinct to be unquestionably certain: or they want to inquire, whether it be reasonable for me to act and think according to a principle, which, by the law of my nature, I cannot contradict, either in thought or in action. Would not the same spirit of inquiry lead a geometrician to attempt a proof or confutation of his axioms; a natural philosopher to doubt whether things be what his senses represent them; an ordinary man to argue concerning the propriety of perceiving colours by the eyes, and odours by the nostrils? Would not the same spirit of doubt and disputation, applied to more familiar instances, transform a philosopher into a madman, and a person of plain sense into an idiot?

But let us not be too rigid. If a philosopher must needs have his rattles and playthings, let him have them: only, for his own sake, and for the sake of the neighbours, I would advise, that edgetools, and other dangerous instruments of amusement, be kept out of his reach. If a Cartesian will not, on any account, believe his own existence, except I grant him his *cogito, ergo sum*, far be it from me to deprive the poor man of that consolation. The reasoning indeed is bad, but the principle is good; and a good principle is so good a thing, that rather than oblige a

man to renounce it, I would dispense with the strict observance of a logical precept. If a stargazer cannot see the inhabitants of the moon with one perspective, let him tie a score of them together, with all my heart. If a virtuoso is inclined to look at the sun through a microscope, and at rotten cheese through a telescope, to apply ear trumpets to his eyes, and equip his two ears with as many pair of spectacles, he has my full permission; and much good may it do him. These amusements are idle, but they are innocent. The Cartesian, if the truth were known, would be found neither the better nor the worse for his enthymeme. The stargazer has not achieved a single glimpse of his lunar friends, but sees more confusedly than before: however, he may console himself with this reflection, that one may pass through life, with the character of a very honest and tolerably happy man, though he should never have it in his power to extend the sphere of his aquaintance beyond this sublunary globe. The virtuoso takes a wrong, and indeed preposterous method, for improving his sight and hearing; but if he is careful to confine these frolicks to his private apartment, and never boast in publick of his auditory, or optical aparatus, he my live comfortably and respectably

enough, though he should never see the spots in the sun, nor the bristles on a mite's back.

I would, however, earnestly exhort my friend the metaphysician, to believe himself a free agent upon the bare authority of his feelings, and not to imagine that nature is such a bungler in her trade, as first to intend to impose upon him, and then inadvertently give him sagacity to see through the imposture. Indeed, if it were a matter of indifference, whether we believe our moral feelings or disbelieve them, I should not object to the use of a little unbelief now and then, by way of experiment or cordial, provided it were a thing that a reasonable man could take any pleasure in. But I am convinced, that habitual dram drinking is not more pernicious to our animal nature, than habitual scepticism to our rational. And when once this scepticism comes to affect our moral sentiments, or active principles, all is over with us: we are in the condition of a man intoxicated; fit only for raving, dozing, and doing mischief.

But alas! the metaphysician is too headstrong to follow my advice. It would be a fine thing, indeed, says he, if gentlemen were to yield to the dictates of nature. Is there a single dictate of nature to which people of fashion now a days pay any regard? No, no; the world is grown

wiser. As to this sentiment of moral liberty, I very much question its title to be ranked with the dictates of nature. It seems to be a piece of vile sophistication, a paltry prejudice, hatched by the nurse, and fostered by the priest. I am determined to take it roundly to task, and examine its pretensions with the eye of a philosopher and freethinker. Very well, sir, you may take your own way; it requires no skill in magick to be able to foretel the consequence. A traveller no sooner quits the right road, on supposition of its being wrong, than he gets into one that is really so. If you set out in your inquiry, with suspecting the principles of common sense to be erroneous, you have little chance of falling in with any other principles that are not erroneous.

The result of the metaphysical inquiry is as follows. "Every human action must proceed "from some motive as its cause. The motive "or cause must be sufficient to produce the ac- "tion or effect; otherwise it is no motive: and, "if sufficient to produce it, must necessarily "produce it; for every effect proceeds necessa- "rily from its cause, as heat necessarily pro- "ceeds from fire. Now, the immediate causes "of action are volitions, or energies of the will: "these arise necessarily from passions or ap- "petites; which proceed necessarily from judg-

" ments or opinions; which are the necessary " effects of external things, or of ideas, opera- " ting, according to the necessary laws of nature, " upon our senses, intellect, or fancy: and these " ideas, or things, present themselves to our " powers of perception, as necessarily as light " presents itself when we turn our open eyes to " the sun. In a word, every human action is the " effect of a series of causes, each of which does " necessarily produce its own proper effect: so " that if the first operate, all the rest must follow. " It is confessed, that an action may proceed " immediately from volition, and may therefore " properly be called voluntary: but the *primum* " *mobile* or first cause, even of a voluntary ac- " tion, is something as independent on our will, " as the production of the great grandfather is " independent on the grandson. Between phy- " sical and moral necessity there is no differ- " ence; the phenomena of the moral world be- " ing no less necessary than those of the mate- " rial. And, to conclude, if we are conscious of " a feeling or sentiment of moral liberty, it must " be a deceitful one; for no past action of our " lives could have been prevented, and no future " action can be contingent. Therefore man is not " a free, but a necessary agent."

This is just such a conclusion as I should

have expected; for thus it always has been, and will be, when the dictates of common sense are questioned and disputed. The existence of body, the existence of the soul, the reality of our idea of power, the difference between moral and intellectual virtue, the certainty of the inference from an effect to the cause, and many other such truths, dictates of common sense, have been called in question, and argued upon. And what is the result? Why truly it has been found, that there is no body, that there is no soul, that we have no idea of power, that moral and intellectual virtue are not different, and that a cause is not necessary to the production of that which hath a beginning. And now the liberty of human actions is questioned and debated, what could we expect, but that it would share the same fate! But passing this for the present,* which, however, seems to merit attention, we

* Some readers may possibly, on this occasion, call to mind a saying of an old Greek author, who, though now obsolete, was in his day, and for several ages after, accounted a man of considerable penetration. I neither mention his name, nor translate his words, for fear of offending (pardon a fond author's vanity) *my polite readers*. ΑΝΘ ὙΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΓΑΠΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ ΟΥΚ ΕΔΕΞΑΝΤΟ—ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥΤΟ ΠΕΜΨΕΙ ΑΥΤΟΙΣ Ὁ ΘΕΟΣ ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΝ ΠΛΑΝΗΣ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΠΙΣΤΕΥΣΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΤΩ ΨΕΥΔΕΙ.

shall here only inquire, whether this doctrine of necessity be not in some important points extremely similar to that of the nonexistence of matter.

1. Of this doctrine we observe, in the first place, that, if any regard is to be had to the meaning of words, and if human actions may reasonably be taken for the signs of human sentiments, all mankind have, in all ages, been of a different opinion. The number of professed philosophers who have maintained that all things happened through unavoidable necesssity, is but small; nor are we to imagine that all the ancient fatalists were of this number. The Stoicks were fatalists by profession; but they still endeavoured, as well as they could, to reconcile fate with moral freedom;* and the first sentence of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus contains a declaration, that "opinion, pursuit, desire and aversion, and, in "one word, whatever are our own actions, are in

* "By fate the Stoicks seem to have understood a "series of events appointed by the immutable counsels "of God; or, that law of his providence, by which he "governs the world. It is evident by their writings, "that they meant it in no sense which interferes with "the liberty of human actions." See Mrs. Carter's admirable introduction to her very elegant translation of the works of Epictetus, § 17.

"our own power." We see in Cicero's fragment *De Fato*, and in the beginning of the sixth book of Aulus Gellius, by what subterfuges and quibbling distinctions the Stoick Chrysippus reconciled the seemingly opposite principles of fate and freewill. I am not surprised, that what he says on this subject is unsatisfactory: for many christians have puzzled themselves to no purpose in the same argument. But though the manner in which the divine prescience is exerted be mysterious and inexplicable, it does not follow, that the freedom of our will is equally so. Of this we may be, and we are, competent judges. It is sufficiently intimated to every man by his own experience; and every man is satisfied with this intimation, and by his conduct declares, that he trusts to it as certain and authentick. Nothing can be a clearer proof, that the sentiment of moral liberty is one of the most powerful in human nature, than its having been so long able to maintain its ground, and often in opposition to other popular opinions apparently repugnant. The notion of fate has prevailed much in the world, and yet could never subvert this sentiment even in the vulgar. If it be asked, where the vulgar opinions of ancient times are to be found? I answer, that in the writings of the most popular poets we have

a chance to find them more genuine than in systems of philosophy. To advance paradoxes, and consequently to disguise facts, is often the most effectual recommendation of a philosopher: but a poet must conform himself to the general principles and manners of mankind; otherwise he can never become a general favourite.

Now the system of Homer and Virgil concerning fate and freewill, is perfectly explicit. "Homer assigns three causes," I quote the words of Pope, "of all the good and evil that "happens in this world, which he takes a par- "ticular care to distinguish. First, the will of "God, superiour to all. Secondly, destiny, or "fate, meaning the laws and orders of nature, "affecting the constitutions of men, and dis- "posing them to good or evil, prosperity or "misfortune; which the supreme Being, if it "be his pleasure, may overrule, (as Jupiter is "inclined to do in the case of Sarpedon)* but "which he generally suffers to take effect. "Thirdly, our own freewill, which either by "prudence overcomes those natural influences "and passions, or by folly suffers us to fall un- "der them."† In regard to some of the decrees

* Iliad, xvi. 433.

† Iliad, i. 5. xix. 90. Odyss. i. 7. 39. See Pope's notes on these passages.

of fate, Homer informs us, that they were conditional, or such as could not take effect, except certain actions were performed by men. Thus Achilles had it in his power to continue at Troy, or to return home before the end of the war. If he chose to stay, his life would be short and glorious; if to return, he was to enjoy peace and leisure to a good old age.‡ He prefers the for-

‡ Μήτηρ γαρ τέ με φησὶ θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
Διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανατοιο τέλοσδε &c. Iliad. ix. 415.

My fates long since by Thetis were disclos'd,
And each alternate, life or fame, propos'd.
Here if I stay before the Trojan town,
Short is my date, but deathless my renown;
If I return, I quit immortal praise
For years on years, and long extended days. *Pope.*

On voit (says M. Dacier, in her note on this passage) partout dans Homere des marques qu'il avoit connu cette double destinée des hommes, si necessaire pour accorder le libre arbitre avec la prédestination. En voicy un tesmoignage bien formel et bien exprès. Il y a deux chemins pour tous les hommes: s'ils prennent celuy-là, il leur arrivera telle chose; s'ils prennent celuy-cy, leur sort sera different.

Sophocles, in like manner, represents the decree of destiny concerning Ajax, as conditional. The anger of Minerva against that hero was to last only one day: if

mer, though he well knew what was to follow: and I know not whether there be any other circumstance in the character of this hero, except his love to his friend and to his father, which so powerfully recommends him to our regard. This gloomy resolution invests him with a mournful dignity, the effects of which the reader often feels at his heart, in a sentiment made up of admiration, pity, and horrour. But this by the by. According to Virgil, the completion, even of the absolute decrees of fate, may be retarded by the agency of beings inferiour to Jupiter:* a certain term is fixed to every man beyond which his life cannot last; but before this period arrives, he may die, by accidental misfortune, or deserved

his friends kept him within doors during that space all would be well; if they suffered him to go abroad unattended, his death was inevitable. *Ajax Mastig.* 772. 794. 818. Εἰ μεν ἔνδον μένει (says the scholiast), σωθήσεται· ἐι δὲ μὴ, ἀπόλλυται· διὰ τουτο δε τὸ δίτιον τῦ μοιριδιου δηλοῖ· ὡς και Ὁμηρος, Διχθαδιας κῆρας φερίμεν θανατοίο τελοσδε.

Sophocles, apud H. Steph. 1588. *p.* 48.

* Non dabitur regnis (esto) prohibere Latinis,
Atque immota manet fatis Lavinia conjux;
At trahere, atque moras tantis licet addere rebus.
Æneid. vii. 313.

punishment:* to virtue and vice necessity reaches not at all.†

In all the histories I have read of ancient or modern, savage or civilized nations, I find the

* Nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat,
Sed misera ante diem, subitoque accensa furore,
Nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem
Abstulerat. *Æneid.* iv. 696.

† Stat sua cuique dies; breve et irreparabile tempus
Omnibus est vitæ; sed famam extendere factis,
Hoc virtutis opus. *Æneid.* x. 467.

I agree with Servius (note in Æneid. x.) that the philosophical maxims to be found in poets are not always consistent. The reason is plain: Poets imitate the sentiments of people of different characters, placed in different circumstances and actuated by different passions; and nobody expects, that the language or thoughts suitable to a certain character, placed in certain circumstances, and actuated by certain passions, should be consistent with those of a different character whose circumstances and passions are different. But I cannot agree with that annotator, in supposing the passage quoted from the fourth book, inconsistent with what is quoted from the 10th; and that the former is according to the Epicurean, and the latter according to the Stoical, philosophy. In the latter passage, it is said, that a certain day or time is appointed by fate for the utmost limit of every man's life: in the former the very same thing is implied; only it is said further, that Dido died before her time; and there is nothing in the tenth book that insinuates the impossibility of this. The sen-

conduct of mankind has ever been such as I should expect from creatures possessed of moral freedom, and conscious of it. Several forms of false religion, and some erroneous commentaries on the true, have imposed tenets inconsistent with this freedom; but men have still acted, notwithstanding, as if they believed themselves to be free. Creeds, expressed in general terms may easily be imposed on the ignorant, and the selfish; by the former they are misunderstood, by the latter disregarded: but to overpower a natural instinct is a difficult task; and a doctrine which is easily swallowed when proposed in general terms, may prove disgustful when applied to a particular case.

"The belief of a destiny," says Mr. Macaulay in his history of St. Kilda,* "is one of the strongest articles of this people's creed; and it will possibly be found upon examination, that the common people in all ages, and in most countries, give into the same notion.—At St. Kilda,

timents contained in these three quotations are conformable to Homer's theology, and to one another; and it deserves our notice, that the first comes from the mouth of Juno, the second from the poet or his muse, and the third from Jupiter himself; whence I infer, that they were agreeable to the poet's creed, or at least to the popular creed of his age.

* p. 243.

" fate and providence are much the same thing. " After having explained these terms, I asked " some of the people there, whether it was in " their power to do good and evil? The answer " made by those who were unacquainted with " the systematical doctrines of divinity was, " that the question was a very childish one; as " every man alive must be conscious, that he " himself is a free agent."—If it be true, as I believe it is, that the common people in most countries are inclined to acknowledge a destiny or fate; and if it be also true, that they are conscious of their own free agency notwithstanding; this alone would convince me, though I had never consulted my own experience, that the sentiment of moral liberty is one of the strongest in human nature. For how many of their vices might they not excuse, if they could persuade themselves, or others, that these proceed from causes as independent on their will. as those from which storms, earthquakes, and eclipses arise, and the temperature of soils and seasons, and the sound and unsound constitutions of the human body! Such a persuasion however, we find not that they have at any time entertained or attempted; from which I think there is good reason to conclude, that it is not in their power.

There is no principle in man, religion except-

ed, that has produced so great revolutions, and makes such a figure in the history of the world, as the love of political liberty: of which indeed all men do not form the same notion; some placing it in the power of doing what they please, others in the power of doing what is lawful; some in being governed by laws of their own making, and others in being governed by equitable laws, and tried by equitable judges; but of which it is universally agreed, that it leaves in our power many of our most important actions. And yet, say some authors, all things happen through irresistible necessity, and there is not in the human mind any idea of any power. Strange! that so many, especially among the best, the bravest, and the wisest of men, should have been so passionately enamoured of an inconceivable nonentity, as to abandon, for its sake, their ease, their health, their fortunes, and their lives! At this rate we are wonderfully mistaken, when we speak of Don Quixote as a madman, and of Leonidas, Brutus, Wallace, Hampden, Paoli, as wise, and good, and great! The case it seems is just the reverse: these heroes deserve no other name than that of raving bedlamites; and the illustrious knight of La Mancha, to whom the object of his valour was at least *a conceivable phantom*, was a

person of excellent understanding, and most perfect knowledge of the world!

Do not all mankind distinguish between mere harm and injury? Is there one rational being unacquainted with this distinction? If a man were to act as if he did not comprehend it, would not the world pronounce him a fool? And yet this distinction is incomprehensible, except we suppose some beings to act necessarily, and others from free choice. A man gives me a blow, and instantly I feel resentment: but a bystander informs me, that the man is afflicted with the epilepsy, which deprives him of the power of managing his limbs; that the blow was not only without design, but contrary to his intention: and that he could not have prevented it. My resentment is gone, though I still feel pain from the blow. Can there be any mistake in this experience? Can I think that I feel resentment, when in reality I do not feel it? That I feel no resentment, when I am conscious of the contrary? And if I feel resentment in the one case, and not in the other, it is certain there seems to me to be some dissimilitude between them. But it is only in respect of the intention of him who gave the blow that there can be any dissimilitude: for all that I learn from the information by which my resentment was extinguished is, that what I sup-

posed to proceed from an evil intention, did really proceed from no evil intention, but from the necessary effect of a material cause, in which the will had no concern. What shall we say then? that the distinction between injury and mere harm, acknowledged by all mankind, does imply, that all mankind suppose the actions of moral beings to be free? or shall we say, that resentment, though it arises uniformly in all men on certain occasions, does yet proceed from no cause; the actions which do give rise to it being in every respect the same with those which do not give rise to it?

Further, all men expect, with full assurance, that fire will burn to-morrow; but all men do not with full assurance expect, that a thief will steal to-morrow, or a miser refuse an alms to a beggar, or a debauchee commit an act of intemperance, even though opportunities offer. If I had found, on blowing up my fire this morning, that the flame was cold, and converted water into ice, I should have been much more astonished, than if I had detected a man reputed honest in the commission of an act of theft. The former I would call a prodigy, a contradiction to the known laws of nature: of the latter I should say, that I am sorry for it, and could never have expected it; but I should not suppose any prodigy in the case. All general rules that regard

the influence of human characters on human actions admit of exceptions; but the general laws of matter admit of none. Ice was cold, and fire hot, ever since the creation; hot ice, and cold fire, are, according to the present constitution of the world, impossible: but that a man should steal to-day, who never stole before, is no impossibility at all. The coldness of the flame I should doubtless think owing to some cause, and the dishonesty of the man to some strange revolution in his sentiments and principles; but I never could bring myself to think the man as passive, in regard to this revolution, as the fire must be supposed to be, in regard to the cause by which its nature is changed. The man has done what he ought not to have done, what he might have prevented, and what he deserves punishment for not preventing; this is the language of all rational beings: but the fire is wholly unconscious and inert. Who will say that there is the same necessity in both cases!

Fatalists are fond of inferring moral necessity from physical, in the way of analogy. But some of their arguments on this topick are most ridiculously absurd. "There is," says Voltaire's *ignorant philosopher*, "nothing without a cause. An "effect without a cause, are words without a "meaning. Every time I have a will, this can "only be in consequence of my judgment good

" or bad; this judgment is necessary; therefore " so is my will."—All this hath been said by others: but what follows is, I believe, peculiar to this *ignorant philosopher*. " In effect," continues he, " it would be very singular, that all nature, " all the planets, should obey eternal laws, and " that there should be a little animal, five feet " high, who, in contempt of these laws, could " act as he pleased, solely according to his ca- " price." Singular! ay, singular indeed. So very singular, that yours, sir, if I mistake not, is the first human brain that ever conceived such a notion. If man be free, no body ever dreamed that he made him-elf so, in contempt of the laws of nature; it is in consequence of a law of nature that he is a free agent. But passing this, let us attend to the reasoning. The planets are not free agents; therefore it would be very singular, that man should be one. Not a whit more singular, than that this same animal of five feet should perceive, and think, and read, and write, and speak; attributes which no astronomer has ever supposed to belong to the planets, notwithstanding their brilliant appearance, and stupendous magnitude.* We do too much honour to such

* Mr. Voltaire has often laboured, with more zeal than success, to prove, among other strange doctrines, that Shakspear and Milton were no great poets. What

reasoning, when we reply to it in the bold, but sublime words of the poet:

> Know'st thou th' importance of a soul immortal?
> Behold this midnight glory, worlds on worlds!
> Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
> Ten thousand add; and twice ten thousand more;
> Then weigh the whole; ONE SOUL outweighs them all,
> And calls the astonishing magnificence
> Of unintelligent creation poor. *Complaint, Night 7.*

Or in the simpler language of another great genius: "If we consider the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale against "brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, "without overvaluing human nature, that the "soul of one virtuous and religious man is of "greater worth and excellency, than the sun and "his planets, and all the stars in the world."*

* Bentley's Sermons, at Boyle's Lectures, Serm. viii.

if I should here help him to an argument as decisive on that point as any he has yet invented, and framed exactly according to the rules of his own logick, as exemplified in the passage now before us? "The English say, "that Shakspeare and Milton were great poets. Now "it is well known, that neither Plinlimmon in Wales, "nor Mealfourvouny in Scotland, neither Lebanon in "Syria, nor Atlas in Mauritania, ever wrote one good "verse in their days; and yet each of these mountains "exceeds in corporeal magnitude ten thousand Mil-"tons, and as many Shakspeares. But it would be very

Mr. Hume, in an essay on this subject, maintains, that the appearances in the moral and material world are equally uniform, and equally necessary; nay, and acknowledged to be so, both by philosophers and by the vulgar. In proof of this, he confines himself to general topicks, on which he declaims with some plausibility. Human nature has been nearly the same in all ages. True. For all men possess nearly the same faculties, which are employed about nearly the same objects, and destined to operate within the same narrow sphere. And if a man have power to choose one of two things, to act or not to act, he has all the liberty we contend for. How is it possible, then, that human nature, taken in the gross, should not be found nearly the same in all ages! But if we come to particulars, we shall not perhaps find two human minds exactly alike. In two of the most congenial characters on earth, the same causes will not produce the same effects; nay, the same causes will not always

"singular, that masses of so great distinction should "never have been able to put pen to paper with any "success, and yet that no fewer than two pieces of "English flesh and blood, scarce six feet long, should, "in contempt of nature and all her laws, have penned "poems that are entitled to general admiration."

produce the same effects even in the same character.

Some fatalists deny, that our internal feelings are in favour of moral liberty. "It is true," says a worthy and ingenious, though fanciful, author, "that a man by internal feeling may prove his "own freewill, if by freewill be meant the "power of doing what a man wills or desires; or "of resisting the motives of sensuality, ambi-"tion, &c. that is freewill in the popular and "practical sense. Every person may easily re-"collect instances, where he has done these "several things. But these are entirely foreign "to the present question. To prove that a man "has freewill in the sense opposite to mechan-"ism, he ought to feel, that he can do different "things while the motives remain precisely the "same. And here I apprehend the internal feel-"ings are entirely against freewill, where the "motives are of a sufficient magnitude to be "evident; where they are not, nothing can be "proved."*—Questions of this kind would be more easily solved, if authors would explain their doctrine by examples. When this is not done, we cannot always be sure that we understand their meaning, especially in abstract sub-

* Hartley's Observations on Man, vol. 1. p. 507.

jects, where language, after all our care, is often equivocal and inadequate. If I rightly understand this author, and am allowed to examine his principles by my own experience, I must conclude, that he very much mistakes the fact. Let us take an example. A man is tempted to the commission of a crime: his motive to commit, is the love of money, or the gratification of appetite: his motive to abstain, is a regard to duty, or to reputation. Suppose him to weigh these motives in his mind, for an hour, a day, or a week; and, suppose, that, during this space, no additional consideration occurs to him on either side: which, I think, may be supposed, because I know it is possible, and I believe often happens. While his mind is in this state, the motives remain precisely the same: and yet it is to me inconceivable, that he should at any time, during this space, feel himself under a necessity of committing, or under a necessity of not committing, the crime. He is indeed under a necessity either to do, or not to do: but every man, in such a case, feels that he has it in his power to choose the one or the other. At least, in all my experience, I have never been conscious, nor had any reason to believe that other men were conscious, of any such necessity as the author here speaks of.

Again: suppose two men, in the circumstances

above mentioned, to yield to the temptation, and to be differently affected by a review of their conduct; the one repining at fortune, or fate, or providence, for having placed him in too tempting a situation, and solicited him by motives too powerful to be resisted; the other blaming and upbraiding himself for yielding to the bad motive, and resisting the good:—I would ask, which of these two kinds of remorse or regret is the most rational? The first, according to the doctrine of the fatalists; the last, according to the opinion of mankind. No divine, no moralist, no man of sense, ever supposes true penitence to begin, till the criminal become conscious, that he has done, or neglected, something which he ought not to have done or neglected: a sentiment which would be not only absurd, but impossible, if all criminals and guilty persons believed, from internal feeling, that what is done could not have been prevented. Whenever you can satisfy a man of this, he may continue to bewail himself, or repine at fortune; but his repentance is at an end. It is always a part, and too often the whole, of the language of remorse: "I wish the deed "had never been done; wretch that I was, not to "resist the temptation?" Does this imply, that the penitent supposes himself to have been under a necessity of committing the action, and that

his conduct could not have been different from what it is? To me it seems to imply just the contrary. And am not I a competent judge of this matter? Have not I been in these circumstances? Has not this been often the language of my soul? And will any man say, that I do not know my own thoughts, or that he knows them better than I? All men, indeed, have but too frequent experience of at least this part of repentance: then why multiply words, when by facts it is so easy to determine the controversy?

Other fatalists acknowledge, that the free agency of man is universally felt and believed: that though man in truth is a necessary agent, having all his actions determined by fixed and immutable laws; yet, this being concealed from him, he acts with the conviction of being a free agent.*—Concealed from him! Who conceals it? Does the author of nature conceal it, and do these writers discover it! What deference is not due to the judgment of a metaphysician, whose sagacity is so irresistibly (I had almost said om-

* In the former editions of this essay, a particular book was here specified and quoted. But I have lately heard, that in a second edition of that book, which, however, I have not yet seen, the author has made some alterations, by which he gets clear of the absurdity exposed in this passage.

nipotently) penetrating! But, gentlemen, as ye are powerful, ye should have been merciful. It was not kind to rob poor mortals of this crumb of comfort which had been provided for them in their ignorance; nor generous to publish so openly the secrets of heaven, and thus baffle the designs of providence by a few strokes of your pen! In truth, metaphysick is a perplexing affair to the passions, as well as to the judgment. Sometimes it is so absurd, that not to be merry is impossible; and sometimes so impious, that not to be angry were unpardonable: but often it partakes so much of both qualities, that one knows not with what temper of mind to consider it:

> " To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace;
> " And to be grave, exceeds all power of face.

But why insist so long on the universal acknowledgment of man's free agency? To me it is as evident, that all men believe themselves free, as that all men think. I cannot see the heart; I judge of the sentiments of others from their outward behaviour; from the highest to the lowest, as far as history and experience can carry me, I find the conduct of human beings similar in this respect to my own: and of my

own free agency I have never yet been able to entertain the least doubt. "Here then we have an "instance of a doctrine advanced by some philo- "sophers, in direct contradiction to the general "belief of all men in all ages." This is a repetition of the first remark formerly made on the nonexistence of matter.

2. The second was to this purpose: "The rea- "soning by which this doctrine is supported, "though long accounted unanswerable, did never "produce a serious and steady conviction; com- "mon sense still declared it to be false; we were "sorry to find the powers of human reason so "limited as not to afford a logical confutation of it; "we were convinced it merited confutation, and "flattered ourselves, that one time or other it "would be confuted."

I shall here take it for granted, that the scheme of necessity has not as yet been fully confuted; and on this supposition (which the fatalists can hardly fail to acknowledge a fair one) I would ask whether the remark just now quoted be applicable to the reasonings urged in behalf of that scheme? My experience tells me, it is. After giving the advocates for necessity a fair hearing, my belief is exactly the same as before. I am puzzled perhaps, but not convinced; no, not in the least degree. In reading some late essays on

this subject, I find many things allowed to pass without scruple, which I cannot admit: and when I have got to the end, and ask myself, whether I am a free or a necessary agent, nature recurs to me so irresistibly, that the investigation I have just finished seems (as Shakspeare says) "like the fierce vexation of a dream," which, while it lasted, had some resemblance of reality, but now, when it is gone, appears to have been altogether a delusion. This is prejudice, you say; be it so. Before the confutation of BERKELEY's system, would it have been called prejudice not to be convinced by his arguments? I know not but it might; but I am sure, that of such prejudice no honest man, nor lover of truth, needs be ashamed. I confess, that when I enter upon the controversy in question, I am not wholly indifferent; I am a little biassed in favour of common sense, and I cannot help it: yet if the reasoning were conclusive, I am confident it would breed in my mind some suspicion, that my sentiment of moral liberty is ambiguous. As I experience nothing of this kind, my conviction remaining the same as before, what must I infer? Surely I must infer, and I sin against my own understanding if I do not infer, that though the reasoning be subtle, the doctrine is absurd.

But what if a man be really convinced by that reasoning, that he is a necessary agent? Then I expect he will think and act according to his conviction. If he continue to act and think as he did before, and as I and the rest of the world do now, he must pardon me if I should suspect his conviction to be insincere. For let it be observed that the fatalists are not satisfied with calling their doctrine probable; they affirm that it is certain, and rests on evidence not inferiour to demonstration. If, therefore, it convince at all, it must convince thoroughly. Between rejecting it as utterly false, and receiving it as undeniably true, there is no medium to a considerate person. And let it be observed further, that the changes which the real belief of fatality must produce in the conduct and sentiments of men, are not slight and imperceptible, but, as will appear afterwards, important and striking. If you say that the instincts of your nature, the customs of the world, and the force of human laws, oblige you to act like free agents, you acknowledge fatality to be contrary to common sense; which is the point I want to prove.

Clay is not more obsequious to the potter, than words to the skilful disputant. They may be made to assume almost any form, to enforce almost any doctrine. So true it is, that much may

be said on either side of most questions, that we have known dealers in controversy, who were always of the same mind with the author whom they read last. We have seen theories of morality deduced from pride, from sympathy, from self-love, from benevolence; and all so plausible, as would surprise one who is unacquainted with the ambiguities of language. Of these the advocates for simple truth are less careful to avail themselves, than their paradoxical antagonists. The arguments of the former, being more obvious, stand less in need of illustration; those of the latter require all the embellishments of eloquence and refinement to recommend them. Robbers seldom go abroad without arms; they examine every corner and countenance with a penetrating eye, which habitual distrust and circumspection have rendered intensely sagacious: the honest man walks carelessly about his business, intending no harm, and suspecting none. It cannot be denied, that philosophers do often in the use of words, impose on themselves as well as on others; an ambiguous word slipping in by accident will often perplex a whole subject, to the equal surprise of both parties; and perhaps, in a long course of years, the cause of this perplexity shall not be discovered. This was never more remarkably the case, than in the contro-

versy about the existence of matter; and this no doubt is one great hindrance to the utter confutation of the doctrine of necessity. Fatalists, indeed, make a stir, and seem much in earnest about settling the signification of words: but "words beget words," as Bacon well observeth; and it cannot be expected, that they who are interested in supporting a system will be scrupulously impartial in their definitions.

With a few of these a theorist commonly begins his system. This has the appearance of fairness and perspicuity. We hold it for a maxim, that a man may use words in any sense he pleases, provided he explain the sense in which he uses them; and we think it captious to find fault with words. We therefore are easily prevailed on to admit his definitions, which are generally plausible, and not apparently repugnant to the analogy of language. But the understanding of the author when he writes, and that of the student when he reads them, are in very different circumstances. The former knows his system already, and adapts his definitions to it: the latter is ignorant of the system, and therefore can have no notion of the tendency of the definitions. Besides, every system is in some degree obscure to one who is but beginning to study it; and this obscurity serves to disguise whatever in the preli-

minary illustrations is forced or inexplicit. Thus the mind of the most candid and most attentive reader is prepared for the reception of errour, long before he has any suspicion of the author's real design. And then, the more he is accustomed to use words in a certain signification, the more he is disposed to think it natural; so that, the further he advances in the system, he is still more and more reconciled to it. Need we wonder then at the variety of moral systems? Need we wonder to see a man's judgment so easily, and often so egregiously misled, by abstract reasoning? Need we wonder at the success of any theorist, who has a tolerable command of language, and a moderate share of cunning, provided his system be adapted to the manners and principles of his age? Neither need we wonder to see the grossest and most detestable absurdities recommended by singular plausibility of argument, and such as may for a time impose even on the intelligent and sagacious; till at last, when the author's design becomes manifest, common sense begins to operate, and men have recourse on their instinctive and intuitive sentiments, as the most effectual security against the assaults of the logician.

Further, previous to all influence from habit and education, the intellectual abilities of diffe-

rent men are very different in respect of reasoning, as well as of common sense. Some men, sagacious enough in perceiving truth, are but ill qualified to reason about it; while others, not superiour in common sense, or intuitive sagacity, are much more dexterous, in devising and confuting arguments. If you propose a sophism to the latter, you are at once contradicted and confuted: the former, though they cannot confute you, are perhaps equally sensible of your false doctrine, and unfair reasoning; they know, that what you say is not true, though they cannot tell in what respect it is false. Perhaps all that is wanting to enable them to confute as well as contradict, is only a little practice in speaking and wrangling: but surely this affects not the truth or falsehood of propositions. What is false is as really so to the person who perceives its falsity, without being able to prove it, as to him who both perceives and proves; and it is equally false, before I learn logick, and after. Is it not therefore highly unreasonable to expect conviction from every antagonist who cannot confute you, and to ascribe to prejudice what is owing to the irresistible impulse of unerring nature?

I have conversed with many people of sense on the subject of this controversy concerning liberty and necessity. To the greater part, the ar-

guments of Clarke and others, in vindication of liberty, seemed quite satisfying; others owned themselves puzzled with the subtleties of those who took the opposite side of the question; some reposed with full assurance on that consciousness of liberty which every man feels in his own breast; in a word, as far as my experience goes, I have found the greater part of mankind, enemies to fatality in their hearts; willing to consider the arguments for it as rather specious than solid; and disposed to receive, with joy and thankfulness, a thorough vindication of human liberty, and a logical confutation of the opposite doctrine.

3. It has been said, that philosophers are answerable, not for the consequences, but only for the truth, of their tenets; and that, if a doctrine be true, its being attended with disagreeable consequences will not render it false. We readily acquiesce in this remark; but we imagine it cannot be meant of any truth but what is certain and incontrovertible. No genuine truth did ever of itself produce effects inconsistent with real utility.* But many principles pass for truth, which are far from deserving that honourable

* Ζητῶ τὴν ἀληθειαν ὑφ' ἧς οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἐβλάβη.
Marc. Antonin.

appellation. Some give it to all doctrines which have been defended with subtlety, and which, whether seriously believed or not, have never been logically confuted. But to affirm, that all such doctrines are certainly true, would argue great ignorance of human language, and human nature. It is therefore absurd to say, that the bad consequences of admitting such doctrines ought not to be urged as arguments against them. Now, there are many persons in the world, of most respectable understanding, who would be extremely averse to acknowledge, that the doctrine of necessity has ever been demonstrated beyond all doubt. I may therefore be permitted to consider it as a controvertible tenet, and to expose the absurdities and dangerous consequences with which the general belief of it may be attended.

Mr. HUME endeavours to raise a prejudice against this method of refutation. He probably foresaw, that the tendency of his principles would be urged as an argument against them; and being somewhat apprehensive of the consequences, as well he might, he insinuates, that all such reasoning is no better than personal invective. "There is no method of reasoning," says he, "more common, and yet none more blam-
"able, than in philosophical debates to endea-

" vour the refutation of any hypothesis, by a pre-
" tence of its dangerous consequences to religion
" and morality. When any opinion leads into ab-
" surdities, it is certainly false; but it is not cer-
" tain that an opinion is false, because it is of
" dangerous consequence. Such topicks there-
" fore ought entirely to be forborn; as serving
" nothing to the discovery of truth, but only to
" make the person of an antagonist odious."* If your philosophy be such, that its consequences cannot be unfolded without rendering your person odious, pray, sir, who is to blame? you, who contrive and publish it; or I, who criticise it? There is a kind of philosophy so salutary in its effects, as to endear the person of the author to every good man: why is not yours of this kind? If it is not, as you yourself seem to apprehend, do you think that I ought to applaud your principles, or suffer them to pass unexamined, even though I am certain of their pernicious tendency? or that, out of respect to your person, I ought not to put others on their guard against them? Surely you cannot be so blinded by self-admiration, as to think it the duty of any man to sacrifice the interest of mankind to your interest, or rather to your reputation as a metaphysical writer. If you

* Essay on Liberty and Necessity, part ii.

do think so, I must take the liberty to differ from your judgment in this, as in many other matters.

Nor can I agree to what our author says of this method of reasoning, that it tends nothing to the discovery of truth. Does not every thing tend to the discovery of truth, that disposes men to think for themselves, and to consider opinions with attention, before they adopt them? And have not many wellmeaning persons rashly adopted a plausible opinion on the supposition of its being harmless, who, if they had been aware of its bad tendency, would have proceeded with more caution, and made a better use of their understanding?

This is truly a notable expedient for determining controversy in favour of licentious theories. An author publishes a book, in which are many doctrines fatal to human happiness, and subversive of human society. If from a regard to truth, and to mankind, we endeavour to expose them in their proper colours, and by displaying their dangerous and absurd consequences, to deter men from rashly adopting them without examination; our adversary immediately exclaims, "This is not fair reasoning; this is personal in-"vective." Were the sentiments of the publick to be regulated by this exclamation, licentious writers might do what mischief they pleased, and

no man durst appear in opposition, without being hooted at for his want of breeding. It is happy for us all, that the law is not to be browbeaten by insinuations of this kind; otherwise we should hear some folks exclaim against it every day, as one of the most ungenteel things in the world. And truly they would have reason: for it cannot be denied, that an indictment at the Old Bailey has much the air of a personal invective; and banishment, or burning in the hand, amounts nearly to a personal assault; nay, both have often this express end, to make the person of the criminal odious; and yet, in his judgment, perhaps, there was no great harm in picking a pocket of a handkerchief, value thirteen pence, provided it was done with a good grace. Let not the majesty of science be offended by this allusion; I mean not to argue from it, for it is not quite similar to the case in hand. That those men act the part of good citizens, who endeavour to overturn the plainest principles of human knowledge, and to subvert the foundations of all religion, I am far from thinking; but I should be extremely sorry to see any other weapons employed against them than those of reason and ridicule chastised by decency and truth. Other weapons this cause requires not; nay, in this cause, all other weapons would do more harm than good. And let it still be re-

membered, that the object of our strictures is not men, but books; and that these incur our censure, not because they bear certain names, but because they contain certain principles.

These remarks relate rather to the doctrines of scepticism in general, than to this of necessity in particular; which I am not ignorant that many men, respectable both for their talents and principles, have asserted. I presume, however, they would have been more cautious, if they had attended to the consequences that may be drawn from it. To which I now return.

Some of the fatalists are willing to reconcile their system with our natural notions of moral good and evil; but all they have been able to do is, to remove the difficulty a step or two further off. But others of that party are not solicitous to render these points consistent. If they can only establish necessity, they leave natural religion to shift for itself. Mr. Hume allows, that, on the principles of those who deny liberty and contingence, it is impossible for natural reason to vindicate the divine character: for that, on the supposition that God is the ultimate cause of every one of our volitions and actions, either none of these can be criminal; or, if they be criminal (which Mr. Hume seems to admit), "we must "retract the attribute of perfection which we as-

"cribe to the Deity, and acknowledge him to be "the ultimate author of guilt and moral turpitude "in all his creatures."—Were authors possessed of that modesty, which Mr. HUME recommends in the conclusion of this essay, I should think they would shudder at the thought of inculcating a doctrine, which *they know* to be irreconcilable with the very first principles of religion; and of which, therefore, they must know that it tends to subvert the only durable foundation of human society and human happiness.

The advocates for liberty, on the other hand, have zealously asserted the infinite wisdom and purity of the divine nature. Now, I confess, that this very consideration is, according to my notion of things, a strong argument in favour of the last mentioned doctrine. Here are two opinions; the one inconsistent with the first principles of natural religion, as some of those who maintain it acknowledge, as well as with the experience, the belief, and the practice, of the generality of rational beings; the other perfectly consistent with religion, conscience, and common sense. If the reader believe, with me, that the Deity is infinitely good and wise, he cannot balance a moment between them; nor hesitate to affirm, that the universal belief of the former would produce much mischief and misery to mankind.

If he be prepossessed in favour of Mr. HUME's necessity, he ought, however, before he acquiesce in it as true, to be well assured, that the evidences of natural religion, particularly of the divine existence and attributes, are weaker than the proofs that have been urged in behalf of this necessity. But will any one say, that this doctrine admits of a proof, as unexceptionable as that by which we evince the being and attributes of God? I appeal to his own heart, I appeal to the experience and consciousness of mankind: are you as thoroughly convinced, that no past action of your life could possibly have been prevented, and that no future action can possibly be contingent, as that God is infinitely wise, powerful, and good? Examine the evidence of both propositions, examine with candour the instinctive suggestions of your own mind; and then tell me, whether you find atheism or man's moral liberty hardest to be believed.

Perhaps I shall be told, that the belief of moral liberty is attended with equal difficulties; for that, to reconcile the contingency of human actions with the prescience of God, is as impossible as to reconcile necessity with his goodness and wisdom. Others have answered this objection at length; I make therefore only two brief remarks upon it. 1. As it implies not any reflection on the divine

power, to say that it cannot perform impossibilities; so neither, I presume, does it imply any reflection on his knowledge, to say that he cannot foresee, *as certain*, that which he himself has determined to be *not certain*, but only *contingent*. Yet he sees all possible effects of all possible causes; and our freedom to choose good or evil can no more be conceived to interfere with the final purposes of his providence, than our power of moving our limbs is inconsistent with our inability to remove mountains. 2. No man will take it upon him to say, that he distinctly understands the manner in which the Deity acts, perceives, and knows: but the incomprehensibleness of his nature will never induce men to doubt his existence and attributes, unless they be men who fancy themselves infallible, and of infinite capacity. Shall I then conclude, because I cannot fully comprehend the manner in which the divine prescience operates, that therefore the Deity is not infinitely perfect? or that therefore I cannot be certain of the truth of a sentiment which is warranted by my constant experience, and by that of all mankind? Shall I say, that because my knowledge is not infinite, therefore I have no knowledge? Because I know not when I shall die, does it follow, that I cannot be certain of my being now alive? Because God has

not told me every thing, shall I refuse to believe what he has told me? To draw such a conclusion from such premises, is, in my judgment, as contrary to reason, as to say, that, because I am ignorant of the cause of magnetical attraction, therefore I ought not to believe that the needle points to the north. That I am a free agent, I know and believe; that God foresees whatever can be foreseen, as he can do whatever can be done, I also know and believe; nor have the fatalists ever proved, nor can they ever prove, that the one belief is inconsistent with the other.

The asserters of human liberty have always maintained, that to believe all actions and intentions necessary, is the same thing as to believe, that man is not an accountable being, or, in other words, no moral agent. And indeed this notion is natural to every person who has the courage to trust his own experience, without seeking to puzzle plain matter of fact with verbal distinctions, and metaphysical refinement. But, it is said, the sense of moral beauty and turpitude still remains with us, even after we are convinced, that all actions and intentions are necessary; that this sense maketh us moral agents; and therefore that our moral agency is perfectly consistent with our necessary agency. But this is nothing to the purpose; it is putting

us off with mere words. For what is moral agency, and what is implied in it? This at least must be implied in it, that we ought to do some things, and not to do others. But if every intention and action of my life is fixed by eternal laws, which I can neither elude nor alter, it is as absurd to say to me, You ought to be honest to-morrow, as to say, You ought to stop the motion of the planets to-morrow. Unless some events depend upon my determination *ought* and *ought not*, have no meaning when applied to me. Moral agency further implies, that we are accountable for our conduct; and that if we do what we ought not to do, we deserve blame and punishment. My conscience tells me, that I am accountable for those actions only that are in my own power; and neither blames nor approves, in myself or in others, that conduct which is the effect, not of choice, but of necessity. Convince me, that all my actions are equally necessary, and you silence my conscience for ever, or at least prove it to be a fallacious and impertinent monitor: you will then convince me, that all circumspection is unnecessary, and all remorse absurd. And is it a matter of little moment, whether I believe my moral feelings authentick and true, or equivocal and fallacious? Can any principle be of more fatal consequence

to me, or to society, than to believe, that the dictates of conscience are false, unreasonable, or insignificant? Yet this is one certain effect of my becoming a fatalist, or even sceptical in regard to moral liberty.

I observe, that when a man's understanding begins to be so far perverted by debauchery, as to make him imagine his crimes unavoidable, from that moment he begins to think them innocent, and deems it a sufficient apology, that in respect of them he is no longer a free, but a necessary agent. The drunkard pleads his constitution, the blasphemer urges the invincible force of habit, and the sensualist would have us believe, that his appetites are too strong to be resisted. Suppose all men so far perverted as to argue in the same manner with regard to crimes of every kind; then it is certain, that all men would be equally disposed to think all crimes innocent. And what would be the consequence? Licentiousness, misery, and desolation, irremediable and universal. If God intended that men should be happy, and that the human race should continue for many generations, he certainly intended also that men should believe themselves free, moral, and accountable creatures.

Supposing it possible for a man to act upon the belief of his being a necessary agent, let us

see how he would behave in some of the common affairs of life. He does me an injury. I go to him and remonstrate. You will excuse me, says he; I was put upon it by one on whom I am dependent, and who threatened me with beggary and perdition if I refused to comply. I acknowledge this to be a considerable alleviation of the poor man's guilt. Next day he repeats the injury; and, on my renewing my remonstrances, Truly, says he, I was offered six pence to do it; or I did it to please my humour: but I know you will pardon me, when I tell you, that as all motives are the necessary causes of the actions that proceed from them, it follows, that all motives productive of the same action are irresistible, and therefore, in respect of the agent, equally strong: I am therefore as innocent now as I was formerly; for the event has proved, that the motive arising from the offer of six pence, or from the impulse of whim, was as effectual in producing the action which you call an injury, as the motive arising from the fear of ruin. Notwithstanding this fine speech, I should be afraid, that these principles, if persisted in and acted upon, would soon bring the poor fatalist to Tyburn or bedlam.

Will you promise to assist me to-morrow with your labour, advice, or interest? No, says the practical fatalist; I can promise nothing: for

my conduct to-morrow will certainly be determined by the motive that then happens to predominate. Let your promise, say I, be your motive. How can you be so ignorant, he replies, as to imagine that our motives to action are in our own power! O sad, O sad! you must study metaphysick, indeed you must. Why, sir our motives to action are obtruded upon us by irresistible necessity. Perhaps they arise, immediately, from some passion, judgment, fancy, or (if you please) volition; but this volition, fancy, judgment, or passion—what is it? an effect without a cause? No, no; it is necessarily excited by some idea, object, or motion, which presents itself independently on me, and in consequence of some extrinsick cause, the operation of which I can neither foresee nor prevent. Where is the man who would choose this fatalist for his friend, companion, or fellow citizen? Who will say, that society could at all subsist, if the generality of mankind were to think, and speak, and act, on such principles?*

* This, it may be said, would suppose a partial necessity. It may be so: but in this manner I apprehend that mankind will always argue, as long as they are conscious of a power of self-determination. And while they are conscious of that power, and argue in this manner, they must consider the doctrine of necessity as repugnant to our most familiar and most permanent notions in regard to morality and human agency.

But says the fatalist, is it not easy to imagine cases in which the men who believe themselves free, would act the part of fools or knaves? Nothing indeed is more easy. But let it be observed, that the folly or knavery of such men arises, not from their persuasion of their own free agency; for many millions of this persuasion have passed through life with a fair character; but from other causes. I cannot conceive any greater discouragement from knavery and folly, than the consideration, that man is an accountable being; and I know not how we can suppose him *accountable*, in the common acceptation of that word, unless we suppose him free.

The reader, if disposed to pursue these hints, and attend, in imagination, to the behaviour of the consistent and practical fatalist, in the more interesting scenes of private and publick life, may entertain himself with a series of very strange and comical adventures. I presume I have said enough to show, that it is not without reason I affirm, "that the real and general belief of ne-"cessity would be attended with fatal conse-"quences to science, and to human nature;" which is a repetition of the third remark we formerly made on the doctrine of the nonexistence of body.*

* See the end of the preceding section.

And now we have proved, that if there was any reason for rejecting BERKELEY's doctrine as absurd, and contrary to common sense, before his arguments were shown to arise from the abuse of words, there is at present the same reason for rejecting the doctrine of necessity, even on the supposition that it hath not as yet been logically confuted. Both doctrines are repugnant to the general belief of mankind: both, notwithstanding all the efforts of the subtlest sophistry, are still incredible: both are so contrary to nature, and to the condition of human beings, that they cannot be carried into practice; and so contrary to true philosophy, that they cannot be admitted into science, without bringing scepticism along with them, and rendering questionable the plainest principles of moral truth. In a word, we have proved, that common sense, as it teacheth us to believe and be assured of the existence of matter, doth also teach us to believe and be assured, that man is a free agent.

It would lead us too far from our present purpose, to enter upon a logical examination of the argument for necessity. Our design is only to explain, by what marks one may distinguish the principles of common sense, that is, intuitive or self-evident notions, from those deceitful and inveterate opinions that have sometimes assumed the same appearance. If I have satisfied the

reader, that the free agency of men is a self-evident fact, I have also satisfied him, that all reasoning on the side of necessity, though accounted unanswerable, is, in its very nature, and previously to all confutation, absurd and irrational, and contrary to the practice and principles of true philosophy.

Let not the friends of liberty be discouraged by the perplexing arguments of the fatalist.* Arguments in opposition to self-evident truth, must, if plausible, be perplexing. Think what method of argumentation a man must pursue, who sets himself to confute any axiom in geometry, or to argue against the existence of a sentiment, acknowledged and felt by all mankind. Indeed I cannot see how such a person should

* There is no subject on which doubts and difficulties may not be started by ingenious and disputatious men: and therefore, from the number of their objections, and the length of the controversy to which they give occasion, we cannot, in any case conclude, that the original evidence is weak, or even that it is not obvious and striking. Were we to presume, that every principle is dubious against which specious objections may be contrived, we should be quickly led into universal scepticism. The two ways in which the ingenuity of speculative men has been most commonly employed, are dogmatical assertions of doubtful opinions, and subtle cavils against certain truths.

Gerard's Dissertations, ii. 4.

ever impose upon people of sense, except by availing himself of expressions, which either are in themselves ambiguous, or become so by his manner of applying them. If the ambiguity be discernible, the argument can have no force; if there be no suspicion of ambiguity, the dispute may be continued from generation to generation, without working any change in the sentiments of either party. When fact is disregarded, when intuition goes for nothing, when no standard of truth is acknowledged, and every unanswered argument is deemed unanswerable, true reasoning is at an end; and the disputant, having long ago lost sight of common sense, is so far from regaining the path of truth, that like Thomson's peasant bewildered in the snow, he continues "to wander on, still more and more astray." If any person will give himself the trouble to examine the whole controversy concerning liberty and necessity, he will find, that the arguments on both sides come at last to appear unanswerable: there is no common principle acknowledged by both parties, to which an appeal can be made, and each party charges the other with begging the question. Is it not then better to rest satisfied with the simple feeling of the understanding? I feel that it is in my power to will or not to will: all you can say about the influence of motives will never convince me of the con

trary; or if I should say, that I am convinced by your arguments, my conduct must continually belie my profession. One thing is undeniable: your words are obscure, my feeling is not; this is universally attended to, acknowledged, and acted upon; those to the majority of mankind would be unintelligible, nay, perhaps they are in a great measure so even to yourselves.*

* "It is evident (says a great philosopher) that as it "is from internal consciousness I know any thing of "liberty, so no assertion contrary to what I am con- "scious of concerning it can be admitted: and it were "better perhaps to treat of this abstruse subject after "the manner of experimental philosophy, than to fill a "thousand pages with metaphysical discussions con- "cerning it." *Maclaurin's account of Newton's discoveries, book* 1. *chap.* 4.

"The constitution of the present world, (says bishop "Butler,) and the condition in which we are actually "placed, is as if we were free. And it may perhaps be "justly concluded, that since the whole process of ac- "tion through every step of it is as if we were free, "therefore we are so." *Analogy, part* 1. *chap.* 6. § 6.

One, who is a fatalist; and one, who keeps to his *natural sense* of things, and believes himself a free agent; these two are contrasted by the same excellent author, part 1. ch. 6. § 3.

CHAPTER III.

Recapitulation, and Inference.

THE substance of the preceding illustrations, when applied to the principal purpose of this discourse, is as follows.

Although it be certain, that all just reasoning does ultimately terminate in the principles of common sense; that is, in principles which must be admitted as certain, or as probable, upon their own authority, without evidence, or at least without proof; even as all mathematical reasoning does ultimately terminate in self-evident axioms: yet philosophers, especially those who have applied themselves to the investigation of the laws of human nature, have not always been careful to confine the reasoning faculty within its proper sphere, but have vainly imagined, that even the principles of common sense are subject to the cognisance of reason, and may be either confirmed or confuted by argument. They have accordingly, in many instances, carried their investigations higher than the ultimate and self-supported principles of common sense; and by so doing, have introduced many errours, and

much false reasoning, into the moral sciences. To remedy this, it was proposed, as a matter deserving serious attention, to ascertain the separate provinces of reason and common sense. And because, in many cases, it may be difficult to distinguish a principle of common sense from an acquired prejudice; and consequently, to know at what point reason ought to stop, and the authority of common sense to be admitted as decisive; it was therefore judged expedient to inquire, "Whether such reasonings as have been "prosecuted beyond ultimate principles, be not "marked with some peculiar characters, by "which they may be distinguished from legiti-"mate investigation." To illustrate this point, the doctrines of *the nonexistence of matter*, and *the necessity of human actions*, were given as examples; in which, at least in the former of which, common sense, in the opinion of all competent judges, is confessedly violated; the natural effects produced upon the mind by the reasonings that have been urged in favour of these doctrines, were considered; and the consequences, resulting from the admission of such reasonings, were taken notice of, and explained. And it was found, that the reasonings that have been urged in favour of these doctrines are really marked with some peculiar characters, which, it is presumed, can belong to no legitimate argumentation. Of

these reasonings it was observed, and proved, "that the doctrines they are intended to establish are contradictory to the general belief "of all men in all ages; that, though enforced "and supported with singular subtlety, and "though admitted by some professed philosophers, they do not produce that conviction "which sound reasoning never fails to produce "in the intelligent mind; and, lastly, that really "to believe, and to act from a real belief of, such "doctrines and reasonings, must be attended "with fatal consequences to science, to virtue, "and to human society."

I do not suppose, that all the errours which have arisen from not attending to the foundation of truth, and essential rules of reasoning, as here explained, are equally dangerous. Some of them perhaps may be innocent; to such the last of these characters cannot belong. If wholly innocent, it is of little consequence, whether we know them to be errours or not. When a new tenet is advanced in moral science, there will be a strong presumption against it, if contrary to universal opinion: for as every man may find the evidence of moral science in his own breast, it is not to be supposed, that the generality of mankind would, for any length of time, persist in an errour, which their own daily experience, if attended to without prejudice, could not fail to rectify. Let, therefore,

the evidence of the new tenet be carefully examined, and attended to. If it produce a full and clear conviction in the intelligent mind, and at the same time serve to explain the causes of the universality and long continuance of the old erroneous opinion, the new one ought certainly to be received as true. But if the assent produced by the new doctrine be vague, indefinite, and unsatisfying; if nature and common sense reclaim against it; if it recommend modes of thought that are inconceivable, or modes of action that are impracticable; it is not, it cannot be true, however plausible its evidence may appear.

Some will think perhaps, that a straighter and shorter course might have brought me sooner, and with equal security, to this conclusion. I acknowledge I have taken a pretty wide circuit. This was owing in part to my love of perspicuity, which in these subjects hath not always been studied so much as it ought to have been; and partly, and chiefly, to my desire of confuting, on this occasion, as many of the most pernicious tenets of modern scepticism as could be brought within my present plan. But the reader will perceive, that I have endeavoured to conduct all my digressions in such a manner, as that they might serve for illustrations of the principal subject.

To teach men to distinguish by intuition a dictate of common sense from an acquired prejudice, is a

work which nature only can accomplish. We shall ever be more or less sagacious in this respect, according as heaven has endowed us with greater or less strength of mind, vivacity of perception, and solidity of judgment. The method here recommended is more laborious, and much less expeditious. Yet this method, if I am not greatly mistaken, may be of considerable use, to enable us to form a proper estimate of those reasonings, which by violating common sense, tend to subvert every principle of rational belief, to sap the foundations of truth and science, and to leave the mind exposed to all the horrours of scepticism. To be puzzled by such reasonings, is neither a crime nor a dishonour; though in many cases it may be both dishonourable and criminal to suffer ourselves to be deluded by them. For is not this to prefer the equivocal voice of an ensnaring wrangler, to the clear, the benevolent, the infallible dictates of nature? Is not this to belie our sentiments, and to violate our constitution? "Is not this to forsake the fountains of "living water, and to hew out unto ourselves "broken cisterns that can hold no water?"

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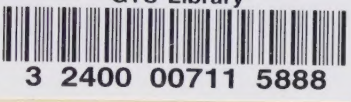
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